



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



TUESDAY — 11 OCT 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	10/11 China strives as one nation under Xi
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/11/world/asia/xi-jinping-china-nationhood.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=World%20News
GIST	<p>Across Tibetan villages in southwest China, Communist Party officials have been spreading the top leader Xi Jinping's gospel of national unity: that every ethnic group must fuse into one indivisible China with a shared heritage dating back over 5,000 years.</p> <p>Thousands of officials in Ganzi, a Tibetan region of Sichuan Province, have been paired with families to collect information and give out gifts of rice, cooking oil and beatific portraits of Mr. Xi — all to hammer home his message of an encompassing Chinese identity, from Xinjiang in the west to the contested island of Taiwan in the east.</p> <p>“In the future I'll be a member of your family, too,” Shen Yang, the Communist Party secretary of Ganzi, called Kardze in Tibetan, told one household, according to a local newspaper.</p> <p>The nationalist impulse behind this campaign is increasingly central to Mr. Xi's efforts to reshape China, with far-reaching consequences for education, social policy and politics. While appeals to the motherland have long been part of the party's tool kit, Mr. Xi has taken the imperative to new heights, calling for a unified “community of Chinese nationhood” as a bulwark against threats at home and abroad.</p> <p>As Mr. Xi prepares to claim a ground-breaking third term in power at a party congress starting on Sunday, he has in effect appointed himself China's historian in chief, crafting a story — retold in museums, on television shows and in journals — that casts his authoritarian, centralizing agenda as a fulfillment of values rooted in antiquity.</p> <p>In his vision, all Chinese people, regardless of ethnicity, are bound by cultural ties that reach back earlier than the first emperors. The implication is that anyone who defies Mr. Xi's priorities is also betraying China's ageless, sacred values.</p> <p>At a time when the United States, Russia, India and other countries have experienced their own resurgent nationalism, Mr. Xi's vision is also aimed at inoculating China against unwelcome influences, especially from the West. In May, Mr. Xi told the Politburo, the party's top 25 officials, that Westerners often wrongly viewed China as just a modern nation-state.</p> <p>“They don't view China from the vantage point of over 5,000 years of civilization,” he said, using an often-used but disputed dating of its origins, “so it's hard for them to truly understand China's past, present and future.”</p> <p>At its extreme, Mr. Xi's insistence on a singular Chinese identity has led to charges of cultural genocide from scholars and foreign countries, citing the mass detention of Uyghurs and other largely Muslim groups in Xinjiang.</p> <p>Other indoctrination efforts are underway among Tibetans, Mongolians and Hui Muslims. Mr. Xi's message is also aimed at Hong Kong and at Taiwan, the island that has grown increasingly averse to Beijing's demands for unification. “Cultural identity is the deepest kind of identity,” he has told officials.</p>

A decade ago, Ganzi was a center of protests by Tibetans who set fire to themselves, sometimes fatally, to denounce Chinese rule. The new campaign appears intended to eradicate any remnants of potential resistance.

The campaign is “about encouraging the family to think of ways of changing traditional thinking while retaining local cultural features,” Wuji Tsering, a Tibetan hostel operator visited by officials in the campaign, said by telephone.

‘The key is unity’

The relics, dug up in southwestern Sichuan Province, looked utterly unlike anything previously found in China. Enormous sculptures of heads with bulging, tube-shaped eyes. Gold masks with elfin ears. A 13-foot bronze tree, seemingly an object of worship.

One of China’s most spectacular archaeological finds, the Sanxingdui site has been excavated since the 1980s, but has attracted a new burst of attention in the past two years, after the discovery of [13,000 more artifacts](#). Many who see it ask the same question: What do these unearthly looking objects have to do with China?

“I think Sanxingdui might have come from aliens,” said Han Zhongbao, a tourist visiting a museum dedicated to the site. “I feel like Sanxingdui doesn’t have any connection with Chinese culture.”

The Chinese authorities have emphatically argued the contrary. The government has promoted the more than 3,000-year-old relics as proof that early Chinese civilization was more diverse than many previously assumed, yet fundamentally cohesive.

“In ‘diversity in unity,’ the key is unity,” Sun Qingwei, an archaeologist at Peking University, told [Xinhua](#), the state news agency. “Sanxingdui civilization is one chapter in the formation of Chinese civilization, and it contains many cultural factors, but in the end it is integrated into Chinese civilization.”

Experts point to similarities between the materials and techniques used to fashion the Sanxingdui bronzes and those used by kingdoms of central China traditionally regarded as a cradle of Chinese civilization.

“Through this very specific, practical scientific evidence, we want to recover these connections one by one,” Li Haichao, an archaeology professor at Sichuan University who led some recent excavations, said in an interview. “‘Diversity in unity’ is not just an empty slogan.”

But other archaeologists argue that the ancient settlements don’t support China’s modern claim to be a united state reaching back millennia.

“There was no idealized nation before,” said [Wang Ming-ke](#), a Taiwanese scholar of ancient China who has studied the Sanxingdui site. Stories of national origin — in China and the world — are constructed by the authorities to consolidate power, he added. “And then they say, ‘This is where our culture, our civilization, our ancestors came from.’”

To Mr. Xi, these questions are loaded with political implications. Before the meeting in May on the origins of Chinese civilization, he held a Politburo [meeting in 2020](#) on “archaeology with Chinese characteristics.” In 2017, he and President Donald J. Trump [haggled](#) over whether China or Egypt had the older civilization.

“Only China has continued onward, unbroken as a culture,” [Mr. Xi told Mr. Trump](#) as they strolled through Beijing’s Forbidden City.

The government has poured increased funding into historical and archaeological research. The support comes with pressure for researchers’ findings to reflect the official narrative. Projects should “reveal the formation and development of a diverse yet united Chinese civilization,” says the [government’s five-year plan](#) for archaeology.

The goal is to excite the kind of pride that Nie Yuying, a 17-year-old high school student, felt as she visited the Sanxingdui museum.

“They show the inheritance of Chinese culture,” Ms. Nie said of the exhibits.

“We’ve been quite deeply influenced by Western culture and art,” she added. “For the sake of our future development and so we don’t forget our own roots, we must study this nation’s past.”

The Chinese government’s efforts go far beyond Sanxingdui. It insists that books and displays about Tibet, Xinjiang and borderlands present them as ageless parts of China. Officials argue that [genetic](#) and linguistic links between Tibetans and Han Chinese, the country’s dominant ethnic group, show that even the mountains of Tibet were conjoined to Chinese civilization thousands of years ago.

“The community of Chinese nationhood originally existed as a natural phenomenon, a natural essence, and only then did we give it a name,” Li Hui, a genetics [professor](#) at Fudan University in Shanghai, [said in a recent lecture](#). “There was first the community and only then each ethnic group.”

‘Strangers in their own home’

Gyal Lo grew increasingly worried as this muscular vision of Chinese nationhood reached the remote towns and villages he regularly visited.

A Tibetan professor of education, he had traversed western China for decades, encouraging Tibetan administrators, teachers and families there to keep schooling alive in their native language and culture. His efforts, never easy, became increasingly fraught in recent years as schools moved to almost exclusively Chinese-language classes.

“A language is not just the grammar,” he said in an interview. “It carries our culture.”

Mr. Xi has sharply accelerated a drive to instill Chinese language and culture in ethnic minorities, most extensively in Xinjiang, but also among ethnic Tibetans and Mongolians.

Officials in Inner Mongolia, a region of northern China, detained parents who protested against the shift to an [all-Chinese curriculum in 2020](#). Last year, the Chinese Ministry of Education [issued orders](#) that preschool for all children from ethnic minorities be in Mandarin.

“For a long time our country’s ethnic work gave too much emphasis to ethnic minorities’ particularity, traditional culture and right to self-government,” Ma Rong, a sociologist at Peking University who has long championed stronger efforts to integrate minorities, wrote [in July in Global Times](#), a state-owned newspaper.

Mr. Xi’s government has been promoting officials who support that viewpoint. This year, it appointed Pan Yue to lead China’s National Ethnic Affairs Commission. From the 1950s until 2020, the commission was always led by an official from an ethnic minority. But Mr. Pan and his immediate predecessor are both Han, and Mr. Pan has energetically taken up the idea of a shared identity rooted in the ancient past.

“Chinese civilization has never been interrupted, and its foundation lies in a great unity,” Mr. Pan said in [a speech last year](#). “Historically, China has not lacked a diversity of ethnic groups and religions, but no matter how diverse these groups, they must through their shared fates always merge into one.”

The Tibetan educator, Mr. Gyal Lo, 55, began his efforts over two decades ago, when the Chinese government was more relaxed about ethnic policy, and schools in Tibetan regions often taught children in their own local language.

Mr. Gyal Lo said he hoped that Tibetan children could first learn their local language — Tibetan is actually a wide family of dialects — and then begin to master standard writing and speech.

Under Mr. Xi, the space for local languages shrank and shrank. Schools increasingly demanded that pupils be educated almost exclusively in Chinese. Since 2016, growing numbers of Tibetan children, as young as 4 or 5, have been sent to boarding schools to accelerate their Chinese language immersion, Mr. Gyal Lo said. He saw the effects when children returned home for the weekend.

“It felt like they became strangers, guests, in their own home,” Mr. Gyal Lo said. “They stay away instead of engaging in the conversation and physically touching their parents.”

Mr. Gyal Lo left China in late 2020, after his teaching contract at a university in Yunnan Province was terminated. He said he feared that his Tibetan ethnicity and educational activism made him a growing target of political suspicion. He now campaigns from Canada, where he previously studied, to end China’s compulsory boarding schools for Tibetan children.

“For a little while we had a little bit of space to do our own approach,” he said. “Now we can speak of school education in Tibet, but we can no longer say there is Tibetan education.”

Honoring the Yellow Emperor

In a narrow, lush valley in eastern Zhejiang Province, hundreds of officials and their guests gathered this month for a ceremony to [honor the Yellow Emperor](#).

Horns and a drum sounded. Soldiers laid baskets of flowers for the emperor, a mythical deity-king known as the forefather of the Han people. Dozens of performers in flowing robes sang and danced. A giant dragon was released into the sky.

“How great our ancestor, who laid the foundation for 5,000 years of Chinese culture,” the local mayor, Wu Shunze, intoned. He included a dedication to Mr. Xi.

Nation-building spectacles like this one — grandiose, often far-fetched recreations of ancient rituals — have grown larger, more elaborate and more prominent across China.

Mr. Xi’s nationhood drive is also aimed at building unity among China’s Han people, who make up 91 percent of its population. Officials see state-managed nationalism — organized, scripted, contained — as a tool to channel public sentiment and maintain a united front in the face of growing hostility, especially from Washington and its allies.

It is the driving force behind Mr. Xi’s attempt to fold Taiwan into China. At his Yellow Emperor ceremony, Mr. Wu promised that unification with Taiwan was “unstoppable.”

“In this view, the party is the arbiter of all Chineseness,” said Geremie R. Barmé, a Sinologist in New Zealand.

A risk is that the government can lose control of nationalism, even as it encourages the emotion. This summer, Chinese social media users — dismayed that Beijing did not forcibly stop the House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, from visiting Taiwan — [erupted in anger](#). They complained that the government’s swaggering rhetoric had misled them to expect military action, and mocked the Chinese Army as weak.

Beijing raced to bring the ire back within its preferred contours. After Ms. Pelosi’s visit, it [issued a policy paper](#) emphasizing bloodlines and cultural ties to restate its view that Taiwan had always been part of China. China’s foreign minister said Taiwan’s president, Tsai Ing-wen, had “betrayed the ancestors.” Another official pointed to noodles served in Taipei as proof that Taiwan was China’s “long lost child.”

Yang Chen, a pharmaceutical company worker who helps organize an annual ritual honoring the Yellow Emperor near Zhengzhou, in central China, said that he hoped more people from Taiwan would take part in such rituals.

	“That’s good to acknowledge that you’re Chinese, to first find something in common in culture,” he said before hesitating about whether such symbols could win over Taiwan. “But then again, wasn’t there that thing a while ago about Pelosi going there?”
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HEADLINE	10/10 Data: ‘great resignation’ not over yet
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/great-resignation-bureau-of-labor-statistics/2022/10/10/id/1091279/
GIST	<p>New jobs data shows that the number of Americans who quit their jobs in September soared to a 30-year high, indicating the “Great Resignation” is not over yet, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).</p> <p>The agency’s numbers reveal that the percentage of Americans who left their jobs hit 15.9% last month – the highest in more than 30 years.</p> <p>The figure represents the number of currently unemployed people who voluntarily left their workplace. Released by the BLS on Friday, the numbers also showed an increase in overall jobs added.</p> <p>In a survey done by ZipRecruiter last month, one in four job seekers said they feel comfortable leaving their current position without having a new one lined up.</p> <p>ZipRecruiter Chief Economist Julia Pollak told Observer that that 25% of respondents think the job market is good enough right now that they wouldn’t stay unemployed for very long.</p> <p>“It’s really an indicator of how hot and how strong this labor market is,” Nick Bunker, economic research director for North America at Indeed, told the outlet.</p> <p>While the widespread wave of resignations isn’t isolated to one specific industry, some sectors have been harder hit than others.</p> <p>According to WorkTango, manufacturing has suffered one of the worst bouts of quitting, with more than 60% of manufacturing employees leaving the industry from before the pandemic to the end of last year.</p> <p>The hospitality, healthcare, education and retail sectors of the economy all experienced similar staffing reductions, according to the data.</p> <p>The Daily Mail reports that more than 4.2 million people left their jobs in August and that a similar number resigned their positions in July.</p> <p>Despite the millions who have exited their roles, the percentage of unemployed remained fairly low. Approximately 20% of August quitters, or 898,000, reported being unemployed after resigning, according to the Mail.</p> <p>The median period Americans stay unemployed is 8.3 weeks, according to Observer, which is the shortest period of time between positions in 20 years.</p> <p>U.S. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh isn’t worried, however.</p> <p>Walsh reportedly said in a recent interview that he recognizes the movement but doesn’t think it will be long-lasting.</p> <p>“It’ll work itself out,” Walsh said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/11 War supporters demand more strikes
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SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-kyiv-estonia-moscow-d6436a6fd6ee2e65748f6a2b4988e167?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=TopNews&utm_campaign=posit ion_01
GIST	<p>TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Moscow’s barrage of missile strikes on cities all across Ukraine has elicited celebratory comments from Russian officials and pro-Kremlin pundits, who in recent weeks have actively criticized the Russian military for a series of embarrassing setbacks on the battlefield.</p> <p>Russian nationalist commentators and state media’s war correspondents lauded Monday’s attack as an appropriate, and long-awaited, response to Ukraine’s successful counteroffensive in the northeast and the south and a weekend attack on a key bridge between Russia and Crimea, the prized Black Sea peninsula Russia annexed in 2014.</p> <p>Many argued, however, that Moscow should keep up the intensity of Monday’s missile strikes in order to win the war now. Some analysts suggested that Russian President Vladimir Putin is becoming a hostage of his own allies’ views on how the campaign in Ukraine should unfold.</p> <p>“Putin’s initiative is weakening and he is becoming more dependent on circumstances and those who are forging the ‘victory’ (in Ukraine) for him,” Tatyana Stanovaya, founder of the independent R.Politik think-tank, wrote in an online commentary Monday.</p> <p>“The fear of defeat is so strong, especially for those who are now fully immersed in this military venture, that Putin’s indecisiveness, with his logic of ‘we have not started anything yet’ and ‘restrained tactics have paid off’ has become a problem,” the analyst said.</p> <p>Putin’s supporters have been calling for drastic steps on the Ukraine battlefield for weeks. These calls intensified over the weekend, shortly after an explosion on the Kerch Bridge linking Crimea to Russia sent shock waves around the globe. The bridge, Europe’s longest, is a prominent symbol of Russian military might and was opened by Putin himself in 2018.</p> <p>“And?” Margarita Simonyan, head of the state-funded RT television, wondered on social media about Moscow’s response to the attack on the bridge.</p> <p>“This is one of those cases when the country needs to show we can hit back,” wrote Alexander Kots, a war correspondent for Russia’s popular pro-Kremlin tabloid, Komsomolskaya Pravda.</p> <p>“It is time for fighting! Fiercely, even cruelly. Without looking back at whatever censures from the West,” Sergei Mironov, a senior Russian lawmaker who leads the state-backed A Just Russia party tweeted Saturday. “There won’t be any bigger sanctions. They won’t say any worse words. We need to do our thing. We started it — we should go till the end. There is no way back. Time to respond!”</p> <p>The response came on Monday morning, with Moscow launching dozens of missiles at Ukrainian cities simultaneously, killing and wounding scores and inflicting unprecedented damage on Ukraine’s critical infrastructure. The strikes, which hit 15 Ukrainian cities, most of them regional capitals, knocked out power lines, damaged railway stations and roads, and left cities without water supplies.</p> <p>For the first time in months, Russian missiles exploded in the very heart of Kyiv, in dangerous proximity to government buildings.</p> <p>Putin said Monday the strikes were in retaliation for what he called Kyiv’s “terrorist” actions targeting the Kerch Bridge, and vowed a “tough” and “proportionate” response should Ukraine carry out further attacks that threaten Russia’s security.</p> <p>“No one should have any doubts about it,” he said.</p> <p>“Here comes the response,” RT’s Simonyan tweeted on Monday after the attacks. “The Crimean bridge was that very red line from the very beginning.”</p>

The strongman leader of Chechnya, a Russian region in the North Caucasus, Ramzan Kadyrov said he is now “100% happy” with how the Kremlin’s “special military operation” is going. He was among the most ardent proponents of “more drastic measures” in Ukraine, even calling for using low-yield nuclear weapons.

The Moscow-installed governor of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, described the strikes as “good news.”

The cheering by Kremlin supporters, however, came with demands for Putin and the Russian military to keep up the pace and intensity of the attacks and damage inflicted on Ukraine’s infrastructure.

Aksyonov, in his statement, stressed that “had such actions to destroy the enemy’s infrastructure been taken every day, then we would have finished everything in May and the Kyiv regime would have been defeated.”

“I hope that now the pace of the operation will not slow down,” Aksyonov wrote.

RT’s top host Anton Krasovsky, after posting a video of himself dancing on a balcony in a cap with a Z on it, said in another Telegram post that the damage to Ukraine’s power lines was “not enough! Not enough!”

Another state TV journalist, Andrei Medvedev, called Monday’s attacks “a logical step, which not just the society has long demanded — the military situation demanded a different approach to the hostilities.”

“And so it happened. But does it change much?” Medvedev, who works for Russia’s state TV group VGTRK and holds a seat in the Moscow City Council, wrote on Telegram.

“If the strikes on the critical infrastructure become regular, if the strikes on railways, bridges and power plants become part of our tactics, then yes, it does change (the situation). But for now, according to (official) statements, a decision to plunge Ukraine into medieval times has not been made,” Medvedev wrote.

Political analyst Stanovaya noted in a Telegram post Monday that “powerful pressures” have been on Putin “to move onto aggressive actions, massive bombings” and that prompted him to act.

“As of today, one can say that Putin was persuaded to resort to a more aggressive line. And it corresponds with his understanding on the situation. But it is a slippery slope — there is no way back,” Stanovaya wrote.

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HEADLINE	10/10 Where home prices are dropping the most
SOURCE	https://www.realtor.com/news/trends/house-prices-are-dropping-heres-where-real-estate-is-declining-most/
GIST	<p>The inconceivable is happening. After two-plus years of unimaginable and seemingly inexorable growth, home prices are falling from their heady peaks over the summer.</p> <p>The reason: Higher mortgage interest rates have thinned out the ranks of buyers who can still qualify for a home loan and sharply reduced the price of the homes the remaining few in the market can afford. Gone are most of the frenzied bidding wars and six-figure offers over the asking prices. Homes are now sitting on the market longer, inventory is piling up, and sellers—at least in some markets—are cutting prices.</p> <p>In some metropolitan areas, median list prices overall are falling from their June highs. These are the places where buyers can find relative deals compared with a few months earlier and where there are generally more homes for sale. The Realtor.com® data team rounded up these buyer-friendly housing markets.</p>

Ironically enough, they tend to be the areas that fully dominated the real estate market during the COVID-19 pandemic, with big influxes of new residents from more expensive parts of the country looking for more affordable homes and investors competing with them. Some of the steepest decreases are in Sun Belt destinations.

These changes can be chalked up to more than just the price deceleration of this time of year, says Realtor.com Chief Economist **Danielle Hale**.

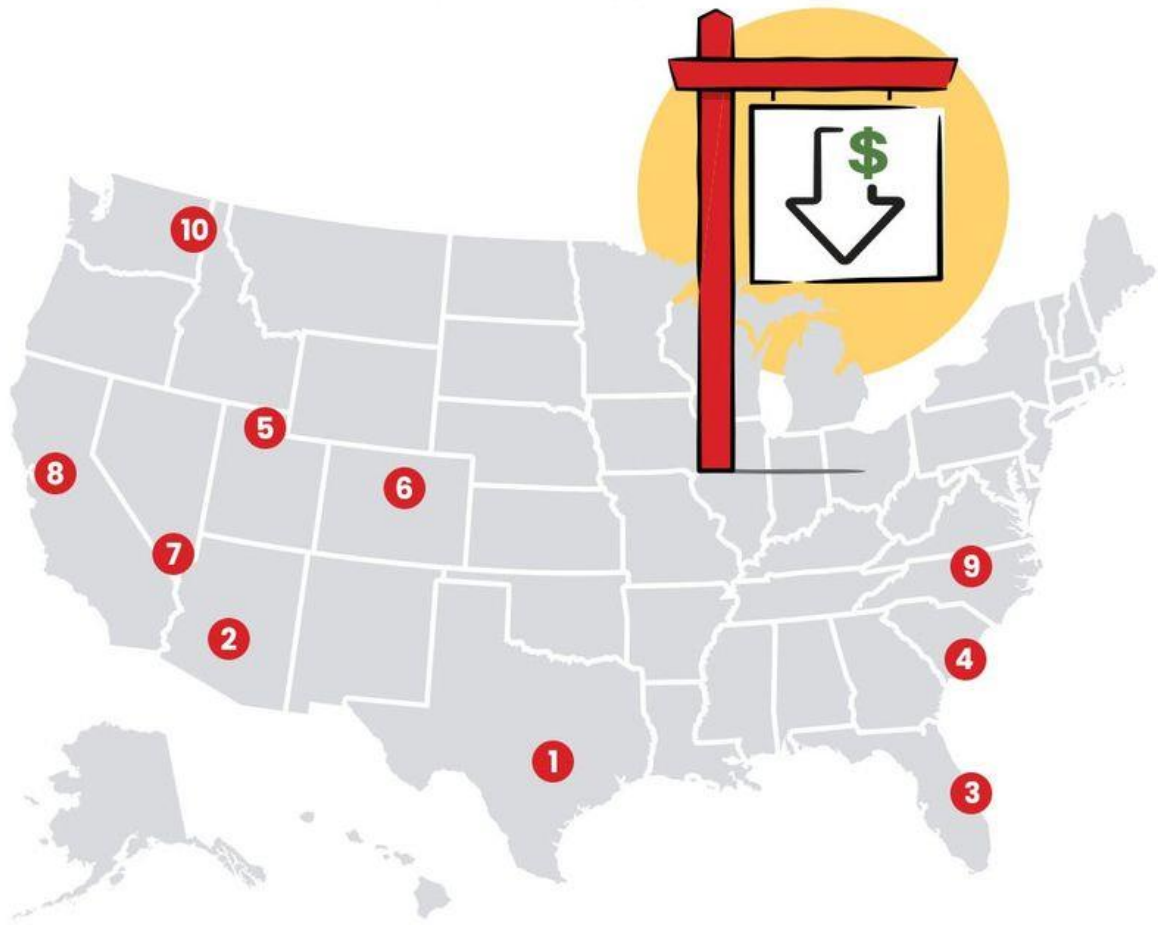
Prices generally “cool off as we move from the heat of the summer into the fall,” Hale says. “But this reflects more than seasonal cooling in prices.”

While the price declines are great for buyers, they’re causing sellers in these markets to sweat, as many begin to drop their asking price. But, nationally, prices are still up 14% since this time last year, even if they’ve dropped since early summer. And although home prices are down in these metros, when compared with the June peak, they’re all still up year over year.

“Home shoppers in these areas are probably excited to see these prices come down,” Hale says. “But to put it into context, it’s still above where it was last year.”

To figure out where home prices dropped the most, Realtor.com looked at the monthly median home list prices in the 100 largest metropolitan areas. Then we calculated the price change since June, when markets peaked nationally. Finally, we included only the metro with the biggest drop in any state, to ensure geographic diversity.

Where Home Prices Are Dropping the Most



1 Austin, TX

2 Phoenix, AZ

3 Palm Bay, FL

4 Charleston, SC

5 Ogden, UT

6 Denver, CO

7 Las Vegas, NV

8 Stockton, CA

9 Durham, NC

10 Spokane, WA

realtor.com

HEADLINE	10/10 Hospitals brace: winter of viruses
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/flu-covid-winter-hospitals-brace-bad-season-rcna50616
GIST	Hospitals nationwide are preparing for another winter with Covid — the first one that's also expected to include high levels of influenza and other respiratory illnesses that have simmered quietly in the background for the past two years.

Flu cases are already rising in parts of the U.S., according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Pediatricians, too, are seeing a growing number of children sick with respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, and [enteroviruses](#).

And despite a [downward trend in Covid](#), tens of thousands of new cases are still being diagnosed every day.

The convergence of viruses is hitting health care systems as they're forced to reckon with staffing shortages that worsened during the pandemic.

"If you go around the nation and ask hospitals how busy they are, every single one of them will tell you: They're busy," said Dr. Carlos del Rio, an executive associate dean at the Emory University School of Medicine and Grady Health System in Atlanta.

Health care workers are quitting at rates 23 percent higher than when the pandemic began, mirroring a larger nationwide trend of workers leaving their jobs, according to [Health System Tracker](#), a joint effort between the nonprofits Peterson Center on Healthcare and Kaiser Family Foundation to monitor how well the U.S. health care system is performing.

"Nurses were on the front line, and some of them [burned out and quit](#)," said Dr. James McDeavitt, executive vice president and dean of clinical affairs at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. "Others that were in their 50s and 60s who maybe thought they'd be working for another five years took an early retirement."

Dr. Bernard Camins, medical director for infection prevention at the Mount Sinai Health System in New York City, has noted a similar "mass exodus" of health care workers who retired early or moved to a different line of work altogether.

Now, he said, "there's a constant struggle to recruit new people."

Staffing deficits mean there is little wiggle room to accommodate any additional surges of patients, whether they're sick with Covid, flu or other illness.

"There's no excess capacity in hospitals," del Rio said. "Anything that increases the number of patients is going to tip the scales."

Despite the shortages, hospital leaders applaud health care workers who have been able to stay the course and are ready for this next phase of infectious disease.

Morale is "actually pretty good," McDeavitt said. "We've moved on from early in the pandemic, wondering if we were going to get sick and potentially die."

"I think those worries are alleviated," McDeavitt said. "We know how to handle it now."

Where are we now?

Reports of Covid cases have been decreasing steadily since early August. As of Oct. 6, the average number of new cases per day, based on a seven-day average, is 44,743 — the lowest it's been since April.

Covid-related hospitalizations, too, continue to tick down. As of Oct. 5, the average daily number of hospital beds used by a Covid patient was at its lowest since June, at 27,161.

But as the cold weather sets in and people increasingly gather indoors, Covid cases are expected to rise.

A recent [analysis](#) from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, predicts that average Covid cases per day nationwide will increase by more than 10 percent in the coming weeks.

“We’ll see an increase in Covid cases — probably not to the extent that we saw in the winter of 2020 and winter of 2021 — but we will see a rise,” said Matthew Binnicker, director of clinical virology at the Mayo Clinic. “Most of those will be infections that lead to mild to moderate illness.”

How well do Covid boosters work?

That prediction reflects what is known so far about how the latest Covid vaccines work. While the shots may not prevent a person from getting sick following an infection, they have been shown throughout the pandemic to keep infected people out of the hospital and from dying.

“How much of a rise in the hospitalizations and deaths we will see is really going to depend on the extent to which people are getting up to date on their vaccines,” especially those at highest risk for severe illness, such as the elderly and those with weak immune systems, said Jennifer Nuzzo, director of the Pandemic Center at Brown University School of Public Health.

The vast majority of Covid cases circulating now are an omicron subvariant, BA.5. The latest version of the Covid vaccine targets BA.5, but since its debut in September, [fewer than 4% of people](#) eligible for the extra shot have received it.

The [Commonwealth Fund](#) recently predicted that more than 745,000 Covid-related hospitalizations and more than 75,000 such deaths could be avoided, if more people got the bivalent shot.

The U.S. is also seeing the beginning of what is expected to be the first rough [flu season](#) in years. While overall numbers remain low, the [CDC](#) reported an increase in positive flu tests last week.

“It’s very likely that we’re going to see influenza roaring back with a vengeance this winter,” said Dr. Dan Uslan, co-chief infection prevention officer for UCLA Health in Los Angeles.

What’s happening in Australia could be a preview: The country is exiting its worst flu season in at least five years, according to the country’s [Department of Health and Aged Care](#).

“Data from the Southern Hemisphere are not good,” Binnicker, of the Mayo Clinic, said. “We need to double down on prevention measures,” such as masking and physical distancing.

There are already signs that viruses are circulating more than they have in recent years.

[Pediatricians](#) have begun to see “high numbers of severely sick patients with respiratory illnesses,” said Dr. Sarah Combs, an emergency medicine physician at Children’s National in Washington, D.C. The illnesses are not necessarily linked to either Covid or flu.

“We are seeing child after child coming in with breathing trouble related to what would commonly be called just a cold or a sniffle,” Combs said. These are children who do not have asthma or other chronic lung diseases that would make them more susceptible to breathing problems.

“They come in having a cold and then within 24 hours they’re actually struggling to breathe,” she said.

The CDC recommends an annual flu shot for everyone aged 6 months and older. Children younger than age 9 who have never had a flu vaccine, the CDC said, should get two this year, at least four weeks apart.

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HEADLINE	10/11 New BQ.1.1 subvariant spreading fast
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/deadly-twist-in-covid-variant-takes-the-world-by-surprise?ref=home
GIST	As the wave of COVID infections from the highly-contagious BA.5 subvariant finally subsided back in late July, new subvariants were already competing for dominance—and the opportunity to drive the next wave of infections.

A little over two months later, epidemiologists are close to naming a winner. In the United Kingdom, infections from a highly mutated subvariant called BQ.1.1 [are doubling every week](#)—a rate of growth that far exceeds other leading subvariants. In the U.S., BQ.1.1 is spreading twice as fast as its cousin subvariant BA.2.75.2.

That means BQ.1.1 is *very* contagious. But that's not the subvariant's most alarming quality. What's most worrying is that it also evades certain antibodies. In fact, BQ.1.1 seems to be the first form of COVID against which antibody therapies—evusheld and bebtelovimab, for instance—[don't work at all](#).

Luckily, the best vaccines still work against BQ.1.1—especially the latest “bivalent” messenger-RNA boosters. Uptake of the new booster has been shockingly sluggish, however, meaning the new jabs aren't yet offering much protection on a population level.

We have the tools to defeat COVID. But “the reality is nobody is using the tools,” James Lawler, an infectious disease expert at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, told The Daily Beast.

Highly contagious and immune-evasive, BQ.1.1 is poised to take advantage of an increasingly vulnerable global population as [antibodies from vaccinations](#) and past infection gradually wear off in coming months. The question isn't whether a fresh wave of infections is coming. It's exactly when.

“We are stepping into a very fluid phase of the pandemic right now,” Edwin Michael, an epidemiologist at the Center for Global Health Infectious Disease Research at the University of South Florida, told The Daily Beast. Michael has built sophisticated computer models for simulating the COVID pandemic.

BQ.1.1 wasn't the inevitable winner of the viral competition that raged, mostly unseen, in the months following the peak of the BA.5 wave. There were other highly contagious and somewhat evasive subvariants, including BA.2.75.2 and [BA.4.6.1](#).

But BQ.1.1 had an advantage, thanks in part to an eyebrow-raising three major mutations on its spike protein, the part of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that helps it grab onto and infect our cells. These mutations—[N460K, K444T and R346T](#)—make BQ.1.1 more contagious than its cousins.

These and other mutations also give BQ.1.1's ability to evade antibody therapies. These therapies aren't the only way to treat COVID, of course—there are antiviral drugs and treatments that don't include doses of antibodies.

But antibody therapies have proved popular and effective against other variants and subvariants of SARS-CoV-2. BQ.1.1 could begin to render them obsolete, narrowing our options for preventing COVID infections from becoming COVID deaths.

One of the most important trends, as the COVID pandemic grinds toward its fourth year, has been the “decoupling” of the infection rate from the death rate. [The worst day for COVID cases](#) was Jan. 18, when 3.8 million people caught the virus.

But by then tens of millions of people were vaccinated—and hundreds of millions more had natural antibodies from past infection. At the same time, our arsenal of therapies was expanding. Which explains why the worst day for COVID deaths didn't coincide with the worst day for infections. Instead, it occurred almost exactly a year earlier: Jan. 20, 2021, when nearly 18,000 people died.

The decoupling trend has endured. The case-rate fluctuates wildly, but the death rate—despite few bumps here and there—mostly keeps inching downward. But if BQ.1.1 drives the next COVID wave, as seems increasingly likely, it's possible the decoupling could reverse somewhat as treatment options diminish.

Fortunately, the latest mRNA boosters from Moderna and Pfizer are still highly effective against BQ.1.1. There's a good reason for this. Moderna and Pfizer formulated the new bivalent boosters specifically to provide immunity against BA.5. BQ.1.1 is a form of BA.5, albeit with additional mutations.

Of course, the bivalent boosters only help if you get them. And a deepening sense of complacency in many countries has translated into [lower and lower vaccine uptake](#). “Vaccine uptake collapsed and will keep going down,” Ali Mokdad, a professor of health metrics sciences at the University of Washington Institute for Health, told The Daily Beast.

In the U.S., 80 percent of people have gotten at least one COVID shot; 67 percent completed a full course of vaccine—either two doses of mRNA or a single dose of certain other vaccines. Just 33 percent got the first round of boosters, which became available last fall. And only 10 percent got the bivalent boosters that regulators began rolling out in August.

The numbers aren’t much better in other developed countries—and far worse in developing countries. And that means the world is mostly depending on antibodies from past infection to prevent a catastrophic wave of new cases and deaths.

But natural antibodies eventually fade. “In terms of variables, the major one is the rate at which natural immunity will wane,” Michael said. It’s possible a helpful degree of immunity from past infection endures for a year or more. It’s also possible it disappears after six months or so.

Epidemiologists agree, however, that natural immunity *does* eventually fade away—and vaccine uptake is too low to compensate for this population-wide loss of antibodies. BQ.1.1 or some other highly-contagious new subvariant is just waiting for our defenses to slip. A new wave of infections could come as early as this winter. Or lingering antibodies could delay it. Michael said his computer models predict a surge in cases starting in April.

Sooner might actually be better for humanity. As bad as BQ.1.1 is, it’s not the last word on SARS-CoV-2’s evolution. “It has a lot of potential mutations, still,” Mokdad said of the virus. “The flu virus keeps on mutating and this one is no different.”

New and potentially worse subvariants will follow BQ.1.1. Even if these new subvariants continue to evade antibody therapies, a steady rollout of new boosters would probably protect us. But we as a species just can’t be bothered to get jabbed.

So we’re counting on catching and surviving COVID, and building up natural antibodies, in order to prevent potentially worse COVID in the future. We’re collectively walking an immunity tightrope.

It’s easy to slip and fall. If you’re not current on your boosters and your antibodies from past infection wear off before you catch COVID again, you could be in big trouble. Especially if you catch BQ.1.1 or an even more evasive subvariant. One that shrugs off some of our best drugs.

That’s the individual prognosis. The outlook for humanity as a whole is equally worrying. Lawler for one said he thinks COVID will be with us, well, pretty much forever. Like the flu. But much worse than the flu.

The best-case scenario, as Lawler described it, is still pretty grim. “I think over the next couple of years, incremental increases in vaccination and repeated COVID infections—over and over and over—may eventually give us enough population immunity that we will see less explosive outbreaks and hospitalization rates and deaths that are a bit lower,” he said. “But I doubt they will get down to seasonal influenza levels.”

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HEADLINE	10/10 Flu cases rising: severe season?
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/flu-cases-rise-us-prepares-possibly-severe-season/story?id=91285465
GIST	Influenza cases are rising in the United States as the country prepares for a potentially severe season .

During the week ending Oct. 1-- the latest date for which data is available -- there were 969 cases of influenza A and 52 cases of influenza B reported to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

What's more, over the same period, the percent positivity rate has risen from 0.49% to 2.5%.

Outpatient visits for influenza-like illnesses have particularly risen for children ages 4 and younger to more than 120,000 during the week ending Oct. 1, a 25.5% spike from the roughly 95,600 visits for this age group that were seen the week ending Aug. 6.

The CDC has previously warned the U.S. may see a harsh flu season after few to no cases were reported over the last two years.

Similar trends are being seen on statewide level.

In New York, 596 cases of influenza were confirmed the week ending Oct. 1, according to the [state's Department of Health](#). This is nearly four times higher than the 150 that were confirmed the same time last year.

Additionally, in Texas, the Department of Health and Human Services confirmed [422 cases of influenza A and B](#) during the week ending Oct. 1. During the same week last year, [no cases were confirmed](#).

Another sign of the potentially severe season comes after Australia experienced its worst flu season in five years.

According to the country's [National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System](#), more than 30,000 cases were being per week during the season's height in June.

Comparatively, at the height of Australia's flu season in 2017, there were 25,000 cases being reported every week.

Researchers and modelers often look to the southern hemisphere, which experiences its flu season first -- typically from May to October -- to predict how the season will look in the U.S.

Last week, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky urged Americans ages 6 months and up to get a flu shot by the end of October.

"Over the past two years, we've seen some worrisome drops in flu vaccination coverage, especially in some groups of people who are at the highest risk of developing serious flu illness," she said during a [press conference](#).

Earlier this year, the CDC published a [report](#) about the drop in flu vaccination uptake. Some reasons given include confusions that COVID-19 vaccines also protect against the flu, people making fewer visits to vaccine providers during the pandemic and fewer flu vaccination clinics open compared to years prior.

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HEADLINE	10/10 'General Armageddon' in charge of war
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/10/sergei-surovikin-the-general-armageddon-now-in-charge-of-russias-war
GIST	<p>When performing combat missions in Syria, not for a minute did we forget that we were defending Russia," Sergei Surovikin, the new unified Russian battlefield commander in Ukraine, told an assembled crowd of elite army personnel at a ceremony in Moscow back in 2017.</p> <p>Surovikin's "defending" of Moscow's interests in Syria involved dozens of air and ground attacks on civilian objects and infrastructure, according to a 2020 Human Rights Watch report, which said Russian</p>

forces under his command struck Syrian “homes, schools, healthcare facilities, and markets – the places where people live, work, and study”.

On Monday morning, just two days after being [appointed as the first overall commander](#) for the war in Ukraine, Surovikin [brought](#) his violent Syria playbook closer to home, with a flurry of rocket attacks against civilian targets across Ukraine, which included a major road junction next to a university and a children’s playground in a park.

“I am not surprised to see what happened this morning in Kyiv. Surovikin is absolutely ruthless, with little regard for human life,” a former defence ministry official, who has worked with Surovikin, told the Guardian. “I am afraid his hands will be completely covered in Ukrainian blood.”

Surovikin first gained notoriety during the [1991 coup d’état attempt](#) launched by Soviet hardliners, when he led a rifle division that drove through barricades erected by pro-democracy protesters. Three men were killed in the clash, including one who was crushed.

His ruthless reputation grew in 2004 when Russian media reported that a colonel serving under him had killed himself after he received a heated reprimand from Surovikin.

His colleagues have since given him the grim nickname “General Armageddon” for his hardline and unorthodox approach to waging war.

Surovikin’s main challenge in [Ukraine](#), experts say, will be to solve the structural problems plaguing the Russian military as it faces a fierce Ukrainian counter-offensive.

Gleb Irisov, a former air force lieutenant who worked with Surovikin up to 2020, said the new general was one of the few people in the army who “knew how to oversee and streamline different army branches”.

“He is very cruel but also a competent commander,” Irisov said. “But he won’t be able to solve all the problems. Russia is short on weapons and manpower.”

Irisov pointed to previous leadership shake-ups that have done little to fix Russia’s military fortunes in Ukraine.

Surovikin’s appointment has, however, softened some of the public anger among Russian hardliners, who were growing increasingly impatient with the country’s military failures.

From his time in [Syria](#), he had developed a good working relationship with the Wagner private military company, said Irisov, and his appointment was welcomed by top critics of the war effort, including Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of the Chechen republic, and the Wagner head, Yevgeny Prigozhin.

“Now, I am 100% satisfied with the operation,” Kadyrov wrote on his Telegram channel on Monday morning, referring to the shelling of Kyiv, where at least six civilians were killed.

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HEADLINE	10/10 Railroad union rejects contract; strike next?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/10/railroad-union-deal-reject-strike
GIST	<p>The US’s third-largest railroad union rejected a deal with employers Monday, renewing the possibility of a strike that could cripple the economy. Both sides will return to the bargaining table before that happens.</p> <p>Over half of track maintenance workers represented by the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division who voted opposed the five-year contract, which contained 24% raises and \$5,000 in bonuses. Union President Tony Cardwell said the railroads didn’t do enough to address the lack of paid time off – particularly sick time – and working conditions after the major railroads eliminated nearly one-third of their jobs over the past six years.</p>

“Railroaders are discouraged and upset with working conditions and compensation and hold their employer in low regard. Railroaders do not feel valued,” Cardwell said in a statement. “They resent the fact that management holds no regard for their quality of life, illustrated by their stubborn reluctance to provide a higher quantity of paid time off, especially for sickness.”

The group that represents the railroads in negotiations said they were disappointed the union rejected the agreement, but emphasized that no immediate threat of a strike existed because the union had agreed to keep working for now.

Four other railroad unions have approved their agreements with freight railroads including BNSF, Union Pacific, Kansas City Southern, CSX and Norfolk Southern, but all 12 unions representing 115,000 workers must ratify their contracts to prevent a strike. Another union, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, initially rejected its deal but has since renegotiated a new contract. Voting will be completed in mid-November.

Joe Biden pressured the railroads and unions to reach a deal last month ahead of a mid-September deadline to allow a strike or walkout. Many businesses also urged Congress to be ready to intervene in the dispute and block a strike if an agreement wasn’t reached because so many companies rely on railroads to deliver their raw materials and finished products.

In general, the deals the unions agreed to closely follow the recommendations a special panel of Biden-appointed arbitrators made this summer. That Presidential Emergency Board recommended what would be the biggest raises rail workers have seen in more than four decades, but it didn’t resolve the unions’ concerns about working conditions. Instead it said the unions should pursue additional negotiations or arbitration that can take years with each railroad individually.

The Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way union said it agreed to delay any strike until five days after Congress reconvenes in mid-November to allow time for additional negotiations.

The Rutgers University professor Todd Vachon, who teaches labor relations classes, said he was not entirely surprised the contract was rejected given how emboldened union members feel to fight for better working conditions amidst the current worker shortage.

“The biggest sticking issue is quality of life – especially access to paid time off and paid sick time. If the railroads can make some movement in that area, it will likely go a long way with rail workers who currently feel they are not being respected by their employers,” Vachon said. “Wages and resource allocation are one important part of contract negotiations, but feeling respected by one’s employer remains one of the top reasons that workers form and join unions.”

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HEADLINE	10/10 US headed for recession?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/oct/10/us-economy-recession-jamie-dimon
GIST	<p>The US and global economy is facing a “very, very serious” mix of headwinds that is likely to cause a recession by the middle of next year, warned Jamie Dimon, chief executive of JP Morgan Chase, the largest US investment bank, on Monday.</p> <p>Dimon pointed to the effects of runaway inflation, sharp interest rate rises and Russia’s war in Ukraine, as factors that informed his thinking. But he added that the US is “actually still doing well” and consumers were likely to be in better shape compared with the global financial crisis in 2008.</p> <p>“You can’t talk about the economy without talking about stuff in the future – and this is serious stuff,” Dimon told CNBC at a conference in London.</p>

“These are very, very serious things which I think are likely to push the US and the world – I mean, Europe is already in recession – and they’re likely to put the US in some kind of recession six to nine months from now,” he added.

Dimon said that the US Federal Reserve “waited too long and did too little” as inflation jumped to a 40-year high over the past 18 months. He said the central bank, which has raised rates five times so far this year, is “clearly catching up”.

“And, you know, from here, let’s all wish him [Fed chair Jerome Powell] success and keep our fingers crossed that they managed to slow down the economy enough so that whatever it is, is mild – and it is possible,” he added.

But the bank chief said he expected volatile market conditions that could coincide with disordered financial conditions. The benchmark S&P 500, Dimon said, could fall by “another easy 20%”.

“The next 20% would be much more painful than the first,” he added.

This is not the first time Dimon has warned of a sharp financial downturn. In June he said he was preparing the bank for an economic “hurricane”. JP Morgan, he said “is bracing ourselves and we’re going to be very conservative with our balance sheet”.

Dimon is not alone in anticipating tough times. Over the weekend, Mohamed El-Erian, chief economic adviser at the German financial services giant Allianz SE said the US economy is on “a bumpy journey to a better destination”.

El-Erian blamed the US central bank for exacerbating the risk of a recession by waiting too long to raise interest rates and then “slamming on the brakes this year”.

“Not only does it have to overcome inflation, but it has to restore its credibility,” El-Erian said of the US central bank on CBS’s “Face the Nation”. “So yes, I fear we risk a very high probability of a damaging recession that was totally avoidable.”

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HEADLINE	10/10 Iran oil workers strike amid protests
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-oil-workers-strike-as-antigovernment-protests-expand-11665416396?mod=hp_listb_pos1
GIST	<p>Workers at a petrochemical complex in southern Iran went on strike Monday, the latest sign that antigovernment protests now in the fourth week are broadening to critical sectors of the economy.</p> <p>Dozens of workers blocked roads and protested at a plant in Assaluyeh in the oil-rich province of Bushehr on the Persian Gulf, chanting “Do not fear. We stand together” and “Death to the dictator,” according to social-media posts.</p> <p>The demonstrations marked the first time the unrest that began last month has spread to Iran’s oil-and-gas industry. Before this, it was mostly retail outlets and small businesses that had closed their doors in support of the rights movement.</p> <p>Iran’s government made no official comment on the unrest at the facility, but the semiofficial Tasnim news agency described the incident as a salary dispute involving 700 workers. It wasn’t immediately clear if work had resumed and whether the strike would affect production.</p> <p>The protest movement was ignited by the death on Sept. 16 of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in the custody of Iran’s morality police, after being detained for allegedly violating the country’s strict Islamic dress code.</p>

Since then, protests have spread widely and morphed from calls to abolish mandatory veiling to an outright ouster of the Islamic Republic leadership, which has been in power since 1979. The government has imposed tight internet restrictions, particularly on cellphone networks and social-media sites.

The growing protests in southern Iran came as gunfire continued early Monday in the city Sanandaj, the capital of Iran's Kurdistan province, and the village of Salas Babajani near the border with Iraq, according to Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, a Kurdish human-rights group.

The organization posted footage showing smoke rising in Sanandaj and what sounded like rapid rifle fire.

Demonstrations erupted in Iran's Kurdish areas last month after the funeral of Ms. Amini, who was Kurdish. The government's [crackdown on Kurds](#) has been especially harsh, with missile strikes and artillery fire at Kurdish areas of neighboring Iraq.

The U.K. said that it was imposing new sanctions on senior Iranian security officials for alleged human-rights violations, including on members of [the morality police](#) responsible for enforcing laws requiring women to wear headscarves and to dress modestly in public.

Britain's Foreign Office said it was banning travel to the U.K. and freezing any assets of Gholamreza Soleimani, head of Iran's Basij force, and of Hassan Karami, commander of a police special forces unit. Both organizations "have played a central role in the crackdown on protests," the statement said.

The head of the morality police, Mohammed Rostami Cheshmeh Gachi, and its Tehran head, Haj Ahmed Mirzaei, were also sanctioned, as was the entire organization. It was unclear what assets the sanctioned organizations or individuals might have in Britain.

"These sanctions send a clear message to the Iranian authorities—we will hold you to account for your repression of women and girls and for the shocking violence you have inflicted on your own people," said U.K. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly.

Meanwhile, Iran's chief justice, Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei, invited protesters to open dialogue with him Monday, the latest attempt by government officials to show flexibility in an effort to end the unrest.

"I announce that I am ready to answer any question, criticism, objection brought up by any political factions," he said at a weekly address. "I will answer every question that's related to my area of authority. We accept criticism and objection and if there's any wrongdoing on our part, we'll correct it."

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HEADLINE	10/10 Wildfire smoke can carry deadly fungi far?
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/wildfire-smoke-may-carry-deadly-fungi-long-distances/
GIST	<p>GLOWING RED SKIES and bitter ash-laden air are increasingly common across much of the US as the warming climate fuels vast wildfires. For years now, researchers have understood that wildfire smoke, and the noxious gases and soot particles it carries, isn't merely an unpleasant experience that forces people to shut windows and herd children indoors. It's a significant health hazard that not only triggers asthma and breathing problems, but can harm immune systems for years.</p> <p>But new research is revealing that the threat is more complex than previously known—and also more dangerous, if that's possible. The churning convection in those enormous plumes can scoop up pathogens from disturbed soil and charred vegetation and carry them long distances from the fire lines. Many of those microbes are still living, and potentially capable of causing infections. Among them, researchers are most worried about fungi, which cause slow-growing internal infections that are difficult to diagnose and treat, and can be disabling and even deadly. That includes the fungal infection valley fever, which lurks in dry Western soils, causes a serious illness resembling pneumonia, and is spreading north as the climate warms.</p>

Thanks to drones carrying sampling equipment, there is already evidence that smoke plumes are packed with [viable bacteria and fungi](#). [One early study](#) has linked a major 2017 California fire with increasing numbers of fungal infections in hospital patients up to 200 miles away. Now several research projects are attempting to precisely identify the microbial contents of smoke and to correlate infection records with maps of the directions in which smoke drifts during fire seasons.

“We have found ample bacterial and fungal pathogens that do pose a significant risk, particularly to our immunocompromised patients: cancer chemotherapy patients, people on medications that knock down their immune system because of autoimmune disease,” says George R. Thompson, a physician and professor at the University of California, Davis, School of Medicine who specializes in invasive fungal infections. But proving the link to any one patient’s illness can be challenging, he points out: “These smoke plumes often will go over multiple states. If you’re 500 or 600 miles away from a fire, even if you see an increase in a particular infection, a lot of people will not make that association.”

Two years ago, Thompson cowrote a [perspective piece in *Science*](#) that made the case for “bioaerosols” in smoke as a [human health hazard](#). His coauthor Leda Kobziar, a wildland fire ecologist and associate professor at the University of Idaho, builds and flies the drones that dive into smoke plumes to harvest whatever microbial matter they contain, a discipline that she has dubbed “[pyroaerobiology](#).” She has demonstrated that smoke not only contains a dense array of viable bacteria and fungi that can be transported long distances, but also that the types of microbes differ according to the fire’s location, rate of combustion, and fuel—underbrush in a prescribed fire, versus building materials and plastics in one that’s out of control.

“We’re really just at the forefront of understanding this mechanism that has probably been influencing microbial dispersal and diversity of life for as long as we’ve had fires—so, many hundreds of millions of years,” Kobziar says.

Researchers already knew that fires create infectious risks for crews on the front lines of fighting them. In August, a team from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the California Department of Public Health, among others, reported that [seven crew members](#) who battled a 2021 wildfire developed coughs and chest pain and had trouble breathing. Three of them were confirmed by lab tests to have valley fever infections. (Among the other four, two could not be tracked down and two had negative tests—though the CDC says those tests can be inconclusive.)

In 2017, other CDC and California state researchers identified [10 firefighters](#) from a state prison crew who also [caught valley fever](#), some with serious enough cases to develop respiratory failure and meningitis. In both episodes, the firefighters were either enveloped in dust and smoke or doing earthmoving—digging ditches and firebreaks; they told the two sets of investigators that they weren’t given any respiratory protection. So their infections might have come from spores inhaled in smoke or from dust and dirt containing fungi that were kicked up by their digging.

But proximity to dust and dirt probably can’t explain the surge in invasive fungal infections—mold, valley fever, and aspergillosis, from a fungus that thrives in decaying vegetation—that researchers from federal agencies and the University of California, San Francisco documented in everyday people who were admitted to 22 California hospitals following that fire in 2017. It also can’t explain puzzling increases in infections that occur in the same season as fires, according to Naomi Hauser, an infectious disease physician and assistant professor of medicine at UC Davis. “During wildfire season, we get patients admitted to the hospital with unusual infections that they shouldn’t really be at risk of,” she says. They’re especially noticeable in burn patients, whose injuries heighten their vulnerability to whatever infections are blowing through.

Hauser has set up a monitoring project that places air-sampling equipment on the trucks and equipment of regional firefighting departments, and also around the Davis campus and in Sacramento. By comparing the microbes the devices capture, she may be able to narrow down whether similar exposures occur both at the front lines of fires and in cities bathed in smoke—or whether fungal infections in residents arise from local sources instead.

Meanwhile, a [\\$1.2 million project](#) based at the University of Florida, run by a team that includes wildfire expert Kobziar and Jason Smith, a University of Florida associate professor who studies forest fungi, is teasing out the contents of smoke and trying to predict the microbial risks it may pose. In one arm of the study, epidemiologists will map plumes from California wildfires between 2017 and 2020 and overlay them with digitized medical records from the California arm of the Kaiser Permanente health system. (Because it operates both hospitals and clinics—and also has a research division and a medical school—Kaiser is able to collect data about its millions of members in a way that is unusual in the patchwork US health care system. Its comprehensive records of visits, diagnoses, and treatments are a rich resource for researchers.)

About 180,000 Kaiser patients are diagnosed with some form of fungal infection every year, says Stephen Van Den Eeden, a senior epidemiologist in Kaiser’s research division. Most of those infections are likely to be minor everyday skin problems, or the invasive infections expected in severely immunocompromised people. But some of the records may reveal fungal infections that can plausibly be associated with smoke plumes wafting over the places where those patients live. If the layers line up—smoke direction, residence, and diagnosis—that will trigger further inquiries about how far fungal spores might have been transported, and which underlying conditions made people most vulnerable. “Every study leads to 10 others,” Van Den Eeden says. “But the basic thing is, do we see any signal at all that represents an association?”

At a minimum, confirming a fungal hazard from wildfires could lead to recommendations that vulnerable people take extra protective measures on smoky days. But it also could contribute valuable evidence to two separate lines of scientific inquiry. One is the ongoing research into how particulates in smoke—minuscule particles known as PM 2.5, or less than 2.5 microns across—affect the immune system. Particles that small can penetrate deep into airways, and researchers at Stanford University’s Sean N. Parker Center for Allergy and Asthma Research have found that they [affect the functioning of the immune system](#), reducing the production of T cells that help the body defend against allergens and pathogens. It’s possible that fungi could hitchhike into the lungs on those particles, or that immune system impairment gives those fungi a head start when they begin to reproduce.

Fungal research could also enhance wildfire control. Fire managers including Kobziar support using prescribed burns to clear out deadwood and underbrush that would otherwise become a wildfire’s fuel. Prescribed burns don’t just swap one fire (and smoke plume) for another; because they’re set in chosen spots and controlled, they’re fundamentally different fire types. “The conditions under which we ignite fires are more conducive to complete combustion, which means that the pollutant products are minimized in relation to how much fuel is consumed,” Kobziar says. “And the conditions are also prescribed so that the smoke does not remain in highly populated areas for extended amounts of time.”

Prescribed burns [are controversial](#) though—and with the West in what seems like a permanent drought, some [politicians and resource managers](#) consider them too risky. If it could be shown that they’re less conducive to spreading fungi, that would be a factor in their favor—and potentially make them a tool for knocking back a health threat we’re just beginning to understand.

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HEADLINE	10/11 UK GCHQ chief: Putin losing war
SOURCE	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11301055/Zelensky-hits-terrorist-state-Russia-video-filmed-bomb-site-missile-strikes.html
GIST	<p>The head of GCHQ has said 'desperate' Russian president Vladimir Putin is losing the war with Ukraine both at home and abroad and faces a potential revolt against his leadership as 'exhausted' troops run out of supplies and munitions.</p> <p>Sir Jeremy Fleming, the director of the UK's intelligence, cyber and security agency, is set to claim the war is badly backfiring in Putin's home country as fighting-age Russians desperately try to avoid being drafted into his 'war of choice'.</p>

In a speech in London later today, Sir Jeremy will say that despite claims of an 'inevitable Russian military victory' at the start of the war, 'it's clear that Ukraine's courageous action on the battlefield and in cyberspace is turning the tide'.

The security chief will also suggest that 'Russia's forces are exhausted' and it has become reliant on prisoners and inexperienced conscripts to backup depleted numbers on the front line.

It comes a day after Russia launched its biggest missile barrage on Ukraine since its illegal invasion in February, killing 11 people and injuring scores more in strikes in cities, including the capital Kyiv.

A defiant Volodymyr Zelenskyy branded Russia a 'terrorist state' after the attack and said it showed the Kremlin is desperate as it is 'not capable of opposing us on the battlefield'.

In a video taunting his counterpart, President Zelenskyy said that despite the strikes Ukraine had managed to shoot down half of the missiles and drones aimed at his country, adding his people 'cannot be intimidated'.

Vladimir Putin claimed yesterday that the missiles were aimed at military, energy and communications networks, but Ukraine says they actually hit power plants and busy civilian areas.

The attacks are thought to be retaliation for an attack on the Kerch Bridge on Saturday which linked the annexed region of Crimea to the Russian mainland.

The 12-mile-long bridge was a key part of the Kremlin's supply chain, and its destruction was a slap in the face for Russian president Putin who saw it as a pet project and a symbol of his supremacy in the region.

It came the day before a meeting of the G7 where the Prime Minister is expected to tell her fellow leaders not to waver in their support of Ukraine following the most recent attacks.

It comes amid concerns that Belarus, the Kremlin's last-remaining ally in Europe, could be about to join the war to back up Putin after its dictator Alexander Lukashenko announced Russian units would combine with his own and deploy to the Ukraine border.

Speaking at the Royal United Services Institute defence think-tank later, Sir Jeremy is set to suggest that GCHQ is aware of how badly the war is going for Putin and the Kremlin.

The Daily Telegraph reported that he will say the despot has 'failed in two major military strategies already' and has 'hit the courageous reality of Ukrainian defence'.

He will say: 'With little effective internal challenge, his decision-making has proved flawed. It's a high-stakes strategy that is leading to strategic errors in judgment.

'Their gains are being reversed. The costs to Russia – in people and equipment are staggering.

'We know – and Russian commanders on the ground know – that their supplies and munitions are running out.

'Russia's forces are exhausted. The use of prisoners to reinforce, and now the mobilisation of tens of thousands of inexperienced conscripts, speaks of a desperate situation.'

He is set to add that Russians have 'started to understand that' desperation too and are becoming aware of 'just how badly Putin has misjudged the situation'.

He will say: 'They're fleeing the draft, realising they can no longer travel.

'They know their access to modern technologies and external influences will be drastically restricted. And they are feeling the extent of the dreadful human cost of his war of choice.'

His remarks come a day after President Zelensky vowed to rebuild all that had been destroyed in the latest missile attacks.

In an eight-minute-long video posted on his social media accounts, the comedian-turned-politician said his security forces were able to stop half the missiles and drones sent by Russia from hitting their targets.

He said: 'Restoration work is currently under way across the country. We will restore all objects that were damaged by today's attack by Russian terrorists. It's only a matter of time.

'Out of 84 Russian missiles launched against Ukraine, 43 were shot down. Out of 24 Russian drones, 13 were shot down. And even after that, every ten minutes I receive a message about shooting Iranian Shaheds [drones] down.

'Therefore, follow the safety rules and pay attention to the air alarm. The danger is still there. But we are fighting. I am grateful to our air forces and ground forces units that were involved today!

'Ukraine cannot be intimidated. We united even more instead. Ukraine cannot be stopped. We are convinced even more that terrorists must be neutralised.

'Now the occupiers are not capable of opposing us on the battlefield already, that is why they resort to this terror. Well, we'll make the battlefield even more excruciating for the enemy. And we will restore everything that was destroyed.

'Believe in yourself, in Ukraine, in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and in our victory! Glory to Ukraine!'

At least 14 people were killed and 97 wounded, with six of those deaths and 51 injuries in Kyiv alone. Rockets also hit the German consulate, but the building was empty.

A mixture of missiles and Iranian-made suicide drones were used to strike the cities of Dnipro and Zaporizhzhia in southern Ukraine, northern Kharkiv and Sumy, central Zhytomyr and Vinnytsia, and even far-western Ternopil and Lviv, President Zelensky said. Some of these cities have not been hit in months.

Dramatic dash-cam footage taken in Dnipro shows two of the huge missile strikes hitting a civilian area, causing fiery explosions that sent debris crashing down on cars and pedestrians nearby.

Putin said he ordered strikes on 'military, communications, and energy infrastructure' after what he called 'terrorist' attacks by Ukraine – pointing to the Kerch Bridge attack but also accusing Kyiv of bombing one of its own nuclear plants, attacking gas pipes and assassinating officials and journalists.

Putin said: 'Kyiv's regime, with its actions, places itself in line with international terrorist organisations. Leaving such crimes without response is impossible. In case of continuing attacks we will respond in [a] harsh manner and in line with [the] level of threats to [the] Russian Federation. Nobody should have any doubt about this.'

In Russia allies of Putin have warned that this is merely the 'first episode' of the country's revenge for the blast which crippled the Crimean bridge and 'there will be others'.

Dmitry Medvedev, a former Russian president himself, said Ukraine poses 'a constant, direct and clear' threat and that the Kremlin should aim to 'completely dismantle the political regime of Ukraine' which he described as 'Nazi'.

Ukraine has not claimed responsibility for the bridge attack and blames Russia for strikes on nuclear infrastructure and gas pipes. Zelensky said yesterday's missile attacks had targeted power networks, water

supplies, and civilians in an attempt to 'sow terror'. 'Russia is trying to destroy us and wipe us off the face of the earth,' he added.

Oleksii Reznikov, the defence minister, said Ukraine's courage would never be broken and 'that the only thing they demolish is the future of [Russia] – a future of a globally despised rogue terrorist state'.

Videos and pictures from the Ukrainian capital showed burning cars and bodies in the streets as officials said rockets hit close to a well-known memorial to a famous statesman, near a children's play area in a park, and a pedestrian bridge. More footage showed an apartment block in Dnipro in flames.

The attacks yesterday drew condemnation from across the world, and Liz Truss is expected to call for a full meeting of Nato leaders when she attends a meeting of the G7 today.

The Prime Minister is also set to say at the virtual meeting that the G7 must not waver in its support for Ukraine after the strikes.

Mr Zelensky said Ukraine counts on the UK's 'leadership in consolidating international political and defence support for Ukraine, in particular regarding the protection of our skies'.

He also called on western allies to provide anti-air and anti-missile systems in response to the attacks.

US President Joe Biden condemned the widespread missile attacks in Ukraine, saying they have targeted civilians and served no military purpose.

'The United States strongly condemns Russia's missile strikes today across Ukraine, including in Kyiv. These attacks killed and injured civilians and destroyed targets with no military purpose,' Mr Biden said in a statement.

'They once again demonstrate the utter brutality of Mr Putin's illegal war on the Ukrainian people.'

The United States has provided more than \$16.8 billion worth of security assistance since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24 and imposed a wide-ranging array of economic sanctions on Moscow over its actions.

'These attacks only further reinforce our commitment to stand with the people of Ukraine for as long as it takes,' Mr Biden said.

'Alongside our allies and partners, we will continue to impose costs on Russia for its aggression, hold Putin and Russia accountable for its atrocities and war crimes, and provide the support necessary for Ukrainian forces to defend their country and their freedom.'

However, there are concerns that the war is set to escalate further after Belarus dictator Lukashenko, one of Putin's few remaining foreign allies, appeared to be laying the groundwork to join the war amid yesterday's attacks.

He announced Russian units would combine with his own and deploy to the Ukraine border, accusing Kyiv of planning to attack with help from allies Poland and Lithuania.

Belarus has acted as a staging ground for Russian attacks on Ukraine, but has not yet been involved in the fighting.

Last night there were reports of large numbers of Russian troops being moved into its ally, with Kyiv Post journalist Jason Jay Smart quoting a source as saying: 'Russian soldiers are entering Belarus by the trainload. They're travelling in cattle cars – just a huge quantity. Just waves of trains arriving.'

Belarus has said it does not plan on attacking Ukraine but will provide an 'immediate and harsh response' if Mr Zelensky orders attacks on its territory.

Meanwhile, hardliners within Russia demanded a declaration of full war and the use of nuclear weapons. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov had ruled out the atomic option on Sunday, but that will do little to dampen fears as Putin runs out of options having already annexed occupied territory and conscripted hundreds of thousands of troops.

Ukrainian social media networks were flooded with videos of defiance in the wake of the attacks, as people in bomb shelters and on the Kyiv subway network sung the national anthem and other patriotic songs even as bombs fell.

Summing up the mood, Ukraine's defence ministry tweeted: 'So, russkies, you really think you can compensate for your impotence on the battlefield with missile strikes on peaceful cities?'

'You just don't get it do you – your terrorist strikes only make us stronger. We are coming after you.'

Widespread power outages were reported after the Russian salvo, with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal saying 11 'key infrastructure facilities' were hit without giving further details. Some cities were also reported to have water shortages.

Within Russia, the strikes were cheered by hawks. Ramzan Kadyrov, the staunchly pro-Kremlin leader of the Chechnya region who had demanded in recent days that military commanders be sacked, hailed yesterday's attacks: 'Now I am 100% satisfied with how the special military operation is being conducted.'

'We warned you Zelensky, that Russia hasn't even got started yet, so stop complaining ... and run! Run away without looking back to the West,' he wrote.

Russia has faced major setbacks on the battlefield since the start of September, with Ukrainian forces bursting through front lines and recapturing territory.

Putin responded to the losses by ordering a mobilisation of hundreds of thousands of reservists, proclaiming the annexation of occupied territory and threatening repeatedly to use nuclear weapons.

Russian officials had predicted retaliation of the highest order after the bridge attack. Alexander Baskin, a Russian senator, is reported to have confidently suggested that the Kremlin's response would be 'adequate, conscious and possibly asymmetric'.

He added: 'This was a declaration of war without rules.'

A red-faced Putin on Sunday blamed Ukrainian special forces for the explosion which severely damaged the key link to the Russian mainland.

The livid president said the blast at Kerch Bridge was designed to destroy 'critically important civilian infrastructure'. He declared that the attack was a terrorist incident.

Speaking before today's Russian attacks, Lord Dannatt, former head of the British Army, said Putin could order the indiscriminate shelling of Ukrainian cities and could even 'go nuclear'.

However, the Kremlin has played down fears from Western observers that it could use nuclear weapons, saying it is 'completely incorrect' that it was considering using them in response.

Russian governors predicted today's revenge missile attacks after the destruction of the bridge on Saturday morning, which was considered to be one of Putin's pet projects.

The bridge has been a symbol of Russian power in Crimea since its annexation of the peninsula in 2014.

The bridge, which spans 19km from Crimea to the Russian mainland, has been used as one of the main supply routes for Russian troops since the illegal invasion of Ukraine earlier this year, allowing Putin to resupply and back up forces occupying Kherson and other southern regions of Ukraine.

Its destruction in a huge blast in the early hours of Saturday morning was a huge blow to the Russian war effort and was a slap in the face for the Russian president.

The 12-mile-long bridge over the Kerch strait links Crimea to the Russian mainland and is a major artery for Putin's forces that control most of southern Ukraine's Kherson region and for the Russian naval port of Sevastopol.

It was damaged in an explosion early Saturday morning which saw chunks of the bridge fall into the sea and a large fire break out.

The incident prompted gleeful messages from Ukrainian officials – though no claim of responsibility – and video footage of the bridge appeared to show a mysterious wave crest underneath the structure moments before the blast, prompting speculation that a Ukrainian-piloted boat or drone could have been behind it.

The horrifying attacks on Ukraine yesterday – which Vladimir Putin claims were 'retaliation' for Ukraine's successful attack on the Kerch bridge – are a sign that the Russian president is, if not yet desperate, getting nearer to it.

They represent a highly significant psychological shift for the beleaguered leader. He is no longer trying to win the war: Now he is simply trying not to visibly lose it.

Previously he could have defined victory however he wanted. But by annexing Ukrainian regions, he has upped the already high stakes. If he cedes so-called 'Russian' territory, he will become the Tsar who gave away Russian land instead of the strongman who restored the empire.

And by ordering partial mobilisation on September 21 he ensured the war now touches every Russian family. Putin has made the catastrophic mistake of calling his own bluff.

He realises he is fighting for his political life and, as we have seen before, he is ready to sacrifice countless lives at the altar of his own ambition. In 2000 he let 118 men die on the stricken Kursk submarine rather than accept help from the West to rescue them.

Now he is prepared to accept appallingly high casualties among the ill-trained conscripts he has sent to Ukraine.

The Russian army has been revealed as shoddy, incompetent and ill-equipped. Money that should have been spent on maintenance was siphoned off. Meanwhile the Ukrainian army, equipped with 21st-century weaponry by the West, and highly skilled partly thanks to British training, has inspired awe with its indomitable spirit.

Battlefield failure reflects badly on Putin personally because he has built himself up as a warrior president despite having no military experience. Some years ago, I met a group of Russian officers who, after alcohol had lubricated tongues, were scathing about Putin's military pretensions. 'I wouldn't want a virgin telling me what to do on my wedding night,' one said.

These sentiments are becoming more widespread in Russia. Putin is coming under increasing flak from nationalists demanding stronger measures in Ukraine. He is still a rational actor, for now. But anger, self-preservation, and political pressure could alter this.

There are nightmare scenarios that he has so far kept locked away. Now, cornered like the rat he once famously chased as a boy in a St Petersburg basement, he is unlocking them.

The missile strikes yesterday were calculated to sow terror – Putin knows the only way he's going to win is if he breaks Ukrainian resistance, or the West's will to continue supporting Kyiv. We must brace ourselves for attacks nearer home.

He could unleash his cyber warfare trolls to disrupt the banking system for example. There could be more economic mischief making, interrupting global food and energy supplies.

I believe that blowing up the Nordstream gas pipe was a warning: 'Look what I can do.' Undersea internet cables are among other likely targets. And we will see more attempts to disrupt politics, such as the forthcoming American mid-term elections. Putin hasn't yet attacked supply lines bringing weapons into Ukraine for fear of Nato retaliation.

But there may be more covert operations in Europe – as when Russian agents blew up an arms depot near Prague in 2014.

I believe that his nuclear threats are largely bluster. But if Ukrainians mount future attacks on Crimea, Putin could feel that he has nothing to lose, as losing the peninsula would finish him.

As a KGB officer in East Germany in 1989 when the Berlin Wall fell, Putin brandished a pistol at crowds surging into KGB headquarters, successfully bluffing that there were more armed troops inside. Now, he is running out of bluffs, and options.

And that is worrying for us all.

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HEADLINE	10/10 Seattle gas prices rising: \$5.52/gal average
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-gas-prices-increase-again-as-opec-cuts-oil-production#
GIST	<p>SEATTLE, Wash. — The average prices of gas in Seattle has risen 15.7 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$5.52 per gallon as of Monday, according to GasBuddy's survey of 775 stations in Seattle.</p> <p>Prices in Seattle are 70.4 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand \$1.55 per gallon higher than a year ago, GasBuddy said in a statement Monday.</p> <p>According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest gas station in Seattle was priced at \$4.53 a gallon yesterday while the most expensive was \$6.29 for a gallon, a difference of \$1.76. The lowest price in the state Sunday was \$4.10 per gallon while the highest was \$6.29 for a gallon, a difference of \$2.19.</p> <p>Gasoline in Tacoma is going for \$5.45 per gallon as of Monday, which is up 19.5 cents from last week's \$5.26 per gallon, according to GasBuddy.</p> <p>It's not just Washington state, gas prices around the country are going up again.</p> <p>"With OPEC+ deciding to cut oil production by two million barrels a day, we've seen oil prices surge 20%, which is the primary factor in the national average rising for the third straight week," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. "Some of the refinery snags that have caused prices to surge in the West and Great Lakes appear to be improving, with prices in those two regions likely to inch down, even with OPEC's decision, as the drop in wholesale prices has offset the rise due to the production cut. But where gas prices didn't jump because of refinery issues, they will rise a total of 10-30 cents due to oil's rise, and some areas are certainly seeing the jump already. For now, I don't expect much improvement in prices for most of the country, with California and the Great Lakes as the exception, with downdrafts likely in the days and weeks ahead."</p> <p>The national average price of gasoline has risen 13.8 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.92 per gallon as of Monday. The national average is up 22.5 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 67.0</p>

	cents per gallon higher than a year ago, according to GasBuddy data compiled from more than 11 million weekly price reports covering over 150,000 gas stations across the country.
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HEADLINE	10/10 Spokane gas prices continue to rise: \$4.77
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/traffic/gas-prices/gas-prices-spokane/293-16ed32c6-fe30-467e-bdf7-aa4ce1c52a49
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Gas prices in Spokane have risen 3.3 cents in the last week, according to a recent survey from GasBuddy.</p> <p>The average price for a gallon of regular gas in Spokane is currently \$4.77 per gallon. Prices are 40.9 cents higher than one month ago and \$1.15 higher than a year ago.</p> <p>According to GasBuddy, the cheapest gas in Spokane was priced at \$4.57 per gallon on Sunday, while the most expensive was priced at \$5.49 per gallon, a difference of 92 cents per gallon.</p> <p>The lowest gas price in the state of Washington on Sunday was \$4.10 per gallon, while the highest was \$6.29 per gallon.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Russia hard-liners get show of force
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/10/world/europe/russia-putin-ukraine-strikes.html
GIST	<p>MOSCOW — For months, Russia’s state media has insisted that the country was hitting only military targets in Ukraine, leaving out the suffering that the invasion has brought to millions of civilians.</p> <p>On Monday, state television not only reported on the suffering, but also flaunted it. It showed plumes of smoke and carnage in central Kyiv, along with empty store shelves and a long-range forecast promising months of freezing temperatures there.</p> <p>“There’s no hot water; part of the city is without power,” one anchor announced, describing the scene in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv.</p> <p>The sharp shift was a sign that domestic pressure over Russia’s flailing war effort had escalated to the point where President Vladimir V. Putin believed that a brutal show of force was necessary — as much for his audience at home as for Ukraine and the West.</p> <p>His military has come under increasingly withering criticism from the war’s supporters for not being aggressive enough in its assault on Ukraine, a chorus that reached a fever pitch after Saturday’s attack on the 12-mile bridge to the annexed Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea — a symbol of Mr. Putin’s rule.</p> <p>With Monday’s devastating escalation of the war effort, Mr. Putin appears to be responding, in part, to those critics, momentarily quieting the clamors of hard-liners furious with the Russian military’s humiliating setbacks on the battlefield.</p> <p>“This is important from the domestic political perspective, first and foremost,” Abbas Gallyamov, a Russian political analyst and former Putin speechwriter, said of Monday’s strikes. “It was important to demonstrate to the ruling class that Putin is still capable, that the army is still good for something.”</p> <p>But with his escalation, Mr. Putin is also betting that Russian elites — and the public at large — do indeed see it as a sign of strength rather than a desperate effort to inflict more pain on Ukrainian civilians in a war that Russia appears to be losing militarily.</p> <p>“The response was supposed to show power, but in fact it showed powerlessness,” Mr. Gallyamov said. “There’s nothing else the army can do.”</p>

The attacks killed at least 14 and wounded scores of others, while countless more in cities across Ukraine were terrified by dozens of incoming missiles explicitly targeting civilian infrastructure.

After the strikes, some of the invasion's harshest critics among the Russian hawks declared that the military was finally doing its job. The strongman leader of the Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov — who recently excoriated the army's "incompetent" leadership — said in a Telegram post that he was now "100 percent happy" with the war effort.

"Run, Zelensky, run," he wrote, referring to Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky.

Other cheerleaders of the war triumphantly recalled Mr. Putin's declaration in July that Russia had not "started anything yet in earnest" in Ukraine.

"Now, it seems, it's started," one state television talk show host, Olga Skabeyeva, said.

Hard-liners in Russia have been pushing this strategy for a very long time, said Greg Yudin, a professor of political philosophy at the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences. "Like, we have to scare them into submission," he said of the hard-right viewpoint. "So, in order to do that, we have to be really, really violent."

The strike on the Crimean bridge, Mr. Yudin said, meant that the Kremlin "had no choice but to give in" and escalate the attacks on Ukraine.

Mr. Putin described the strikes as a response to Ukrainian "terrorist acts," casting them as a one-time assault to deter future Ukrainian attacks on Russian territory. In his home city, St. Petersburg, where he had traveled on Friday for his 70th birthday, Mr. Putin spoke on national television for just over three minutes in what the Kremlin characterized as the start of a meeting with his Security Council.

He made a point of saying the strikes had occurred at the military's initiative, an apparent effort to head off assertions that he was plotting the war effort in isolation.

"This morning, at the suggestion of the Ministry of Defense and according to the plan of the Russian General Staff, a massive strike with air, sea and land-based high-precision long-range weapons was launched against Ukrainian energy, military command and communications facilities," Mr. Putin said.

"If attempts to carry out terrorist attacks on our territory continue, the measures taken by Russia will be tough and in their scale will correspond to the level of threats posed to the Russian Federation. No one should have any doubt about it."

In his speech, Mr. Putin made one notable omission: He did not mention the West as the ultimate culprit behind Saturday's Crimean bridge explosion or other suspected Ukrainian attacks. That was a departure from the typical Kremlin rhetoric that portrays Washington and London as the puppeteers behind Ukraine's resistance.

The shift was a possible signal that the Russian leader was interested in controlling the escalation of the war, and that he was not on the verge of provoking a direct conflict with NATO.

Still, the deadly and seemingly indiscriminate strikes, while satisfying the bloodthirstiness of Russian hawks, carry some risk for Mr. Putin, not least because they clash with the Kremlin's claims that Russia was not targeting Ukrainian civilians and was simply conducting a "special military operation."

They could also put pressure on Mr. Putin to escalate further in the case of additional Ukrainian attacks or frontline successes, potentially increasing the discord within Russia's ruling elite over how hard to push in Ukraine.

Indeed, pro-Kremlin figures, while celebrating the strikes, struggled to explain the incongruence of the fiery assault on cities that, in Mr. Putin's telling, are core to Russia's cultural heritage. Some justified the mayhem by blaming Ukraine and the West.

"It is bitter for us to see missile attacks on one of the most beautiful cities in the world, our Kyiv," Sergei Markov, a pro-Kremlin commentator who is frequently on state television, wrote on Telegram. "All responsibility for the attacks on Kyiv lies with the occupiers and their collaborators. That is, on Biden and Zelensky personally."

Inside Russia, few voices on Monday urged restraint. Even as the hawks praised the attacks, some lamented that Mr. Putin did not go far enough; Dmitri A. Medvedev, the former Russian president and current vice chairman of Mr. Putin's Security Council, said on Telegram that the only way to protect Russia was to "completely dismantle" the government in Ukraine.

Some signs pointed to Mr. Putin's being prepared for a wider escalation of the war. On Saturday, he appointed a general known for his ruthlessness, Sergei Surovikin, to lead the war effort in Ukraine. And Mr. Putin's closest international ally, President Aleksandr G. Lukashenko of Belarus, declared on Monday that thousands of Russian soldiers would soon arrive in the country to form a joint military group with Belarusian forces — creating the specter of a new threat to Ukraine's north.

Vladimir B. Pastukhov, a Russian political scientist and lawyer, said Mr. Putin's escalations "run counter to his own intuition" and seriously limit his policy options by backing him into a corner.

"All of Putin's actions today are aimed at getting out of this corner from which the only way out is the nuclear button," Mr. Pastukhov, an honorary senior research associate at University College London, said in a phone interview. "In a sense, what has just happened really increases risks for him."

In central Moscow, many people said they had been unaware of what happened in Ukraine. People soaked up the sun in the chic neighborhood around the central Tsvetnoy Boulevard or rushed to work or appointments.

Some younger people, more attuned to social media, said they were aware of the strikes on Ukraine but felt powerless to assign blame. "It is bad when people are killed for any reason," said Sasha, 19, a university student. Still, she went on, "In any fight, both sides are responsible."

In Russia, the penalties for criticizing the war — or even using the term war — come with hefty fines or jail time, so many Russians are cautious about making comments that might have a negative connotation about the war.

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HEADLINE	10/10 India, China calls for de-escalation
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/10/world/europe/india-china-russia-strikes-ukraine.html
GIST	<p>NEW DELHI — India and China, two powers that have offered Russia some relief in the face of Western sanctions, expressed concern after the deadly missile strikes across Ukraine on Monday and renewed calls for de-escalation and dialogue.</p> <p>Mao Ning, a spokeswoman for China's Foreign Ministry, told a press briefing that "all countries deserve respect for their sovereignty and territorial integrity" and that "support should be given to all efforts that are conducive to peacefully resolving the crisis."</p> <p>Arindam Bagchi, the spokesman for India's Ministry of External Affairs, said New Delhi would offer support for efforts to calm the fighting.</p> <p>"India is deeply concerned at the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, including targeting of infrastructure and deaths of civilians," Mr. Bagchi said.</p>

	<p>As the war in Ukraine has dragged on, President Vladimir V. Putin’s continued aggression has put his remaining allies in a difficult position. China and India have increasingly sought to distance themselves from the Russian leader, even as they have avoided directly condemning his invasion of Ukraine and continued to engage with Moscow economically — especially by purchasing more Russian oil as Europe has moved to reduce its imports.</p> <p>At a summit in Uzbekistan last month that was meant to be a show of force for Mr. Putin, the Russian leader acknowledged that President Xi Jinping of China had raised “questions and concerns” about the war. India’s prime minister, Narendra Modi, was more public and direct, describing how the war has exacerbated challenges for developing countries. He told Mr. Putin at the summit that their meeting would be “a chance to discuss how we can move forward on the path of peace.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Older storm victims uncertain future
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/10/us/florida-hurricane-ian-retirees.html
GIST	<p>FORT MYERS, Fla. — More than two decades ago, Jane and Del Compton stumbled upon Fort Myers while on vacation in southwest Florida. This was where they would retire, they decided on the spot, in a place where they could grow old in peace and sunshine.</p> <p>They bought a double lot with a mobile home and a few small luxuries: a fan with a remote and his-and-hers televisions so she could follow her soap operas and he could watch cowboy shows.</p> <p>But Hurricane Ian ravaged their piece of paradise, soaking the photos from four decades of marriage, destroying their car and leaving them without a place to live. They had no homeowner’s insurance; their policy was canceled in June because of the age of their home, a 1978 model.</p> <p>Now the Comptons — she at 77, he at 81 — are resigned to abandoning their retirement dream. They will return to their native Louisville, Ky., in the coming weeks to stay with their daughter and figure out their next steps, though they are loath to leave their beloved church community and friends. Spending their twilight years in Florida seems suddenly out of reach.</p> <p>“We have talked about it, we have argued about it, we have screamed about it, we have cried about it,” said Ms. Compton, sitting outside the church where the couple has stayed with the one box of sentimental treasures they managed to salvage. “Our bubble has been burst.”</p> <p>Official tallies of deaths related to the storm suggest that older Americans died in disproportionate numbers. Ages or approximate ages have been released for 96 of the hurricane’s 126 victims in Florida and North Carolina. At least 70 people who died were 60 or older. Many victims were found dead at their homes. But Ian not only killed more older people; it also created uniquely wrenching situations for those who survived.</p> <p>Even if they can afford to rebuild, those people may not have the time or energy required for such a difficult task and the prospect of tighter building codes might make that more expensive than ever. Many, like the Comptons, live on fixed incomes, lack flood insurance or purchased their homes before the housing boom of the last decade, when the region was far more affordable. Recapturing their paradise may not be possible — a cruel and abrupt blow.</p> <p>In interviews, several residents said they had defiantly ridden out the storm in the homes they had poured their savings into, partly to ensure they could easily begin cleaning up the damage.</p> <p>Richard Hoyle, 75, moved with his wife to Pine Island, near Fort Myers, in December, after she asked to move to the region from the mountains of Tennessee. He had insisted that they stay through the hurricane, but the storm surge lapped the second flight of stairs to their home, and they watched boats fly across the canal in winds that topped 150 miles per hour.</p>

“We’d already decided, this is our retirement home, and we’ll stay and fight for it,” said Mr. Hoyle, a former Marine and firefighter. “I’m glad that we stayed — some battles are worth fighting.”

Likewise, Garland Roach, 79, said he had no intention of leaving his badly damaged home in a modest neighborhood of North Fort Myers, where the lone palm tree in his front yard was now surrounded by drain pipes, siding and other debris.

“My daughter wants me to come back to Ohio, and I told her I would in my ashes,” he said, adding that he was hoping the Federal Emergency Management Agency or the National Guard would provide a tarp for his mangled roof. “I couldn’t last another winter up there with my arthritis.”

Two deaths from the storm, Florida officials said, were men in their 70s who shot themselves after seeing the destruction to their property.

“I think it’s a breaking point for a lot of people,” said Carol Freeman, 75, pausing as she cleaned the muddied floor of her home on Pine Island, which was ravaged by the storm.

Since the hurricane, Ms. Freeman, a retired postal worker who lives with her parrot, Jose, had been without power, forced to use baby wipes to keep clean and, at least once, eat a donated military-style meal for dinner. She had spent days debating whether it was worth staying.

It may be time, she said, to return to her native Chicago after about four decades on the island. “Too old to be doing this,” she said.

Some retirees who wintered on the Gulf Coast are already planning their exits from the state.

In Fort Myers Beach, an island town that attracted tourists and Midwestern snowbirds, entire groups of friends were gathering recently to inspect the wreckage — and to start mourning the end of their Florida lives. At Gulf Cove, a mobile home community near the base of a bridge, residents were trying to salvage belongings from their ruined properties. Some said that they expected that the patch of waterfront land where they had cultivated tight-knit friendships over the years would be sold to developers and razed.

“Even if something miraculous happened that we could get back together, there are a lot of couples in their 80s or 90s,” said one of the residents, Deb Macer, 69. “They’re just not going to come back.”

Before the hurricane, days in their neighborhood had a familiar, comforting rhythm. The retirees who lived there planned coffee hours and daily walks over the bridge to Estero Island. Ms. Macer planned crafting get-togethers and her husband, Stacy, 70, was known as the community handyman.

“I fear it’s gone,” said their friend Paul Wasko, 75. “This way of life is gone.”

Cindy and Steve Duello had barely begun fulfilling their dream of retiring here. Frequent walks and bike rides around Fort Myers Beach had kept them feeling vibrant and healthy well into their 60s. They fussed over their orchids, mingled with neighbors and taught their grandchildren to scour the beach for prized heart-shaped rocks.

At the center of it all was a modest two-bedroom house on Albatross Street, the gathering place since the 1980s for four generations of Duellos.

“It was only 1,200 square feet, but it was our mansion,” said Ms. Duello, 68.

Ian left much of Fort Myers Beach a flattened, unrecognizable ruin, and the Duello house saturated with seawater. Days after the storm, the Duellos made their way to the island, saw their destroyed home and realized that the town could not be rebuilt in time for them to enjoy it again.

“It won’t return in our lifetime,” Ms. Duello said, through tears. “I can feel this has already aged me.”

For some older Floridians, the storm created a world with no good options: They could not imagine leaving the state at this stage of their lives, yet their homes were gone, perhaps forever.

In Naples, about 40 miles south of Fort Myers, the River Park neighborhood was a scene of despair on Thursday. Workers and homeowners were lugging soaked items out of homes, building giant heaps of debris on the curb.

Rosalie Bulger, 73, was in her living room, surveying what was left of the stucco one-story house where she had lived for 35 years. The smell of mold and rot was overpowering.

“I am numb,” she said as workers wearing N95 masks moved her belongings into the driveway: glassware, decorative pots, a rack of brightly colored dresses.

Ms. Bulger was enjoying a life with the comforts of family close by: Her daughter and son-in-law lived in the bungalow next door. As she looked around at her ruined belongings, she said she would depend on God to help her figure out what to do next, though she could not imagine how long it would take — if ever — for her house to be habitable again.

“I’m not going,” she said of the notion that she would join relatives or friends in another state. “But we can’t live here anymore, either.”

After her husband died last year on Mother’s Day, Linda Stevens, 75, decided to live permanently on Pine Island, which had offered many people a far more affordable sanctuary than the wealthier homes on nearby Sanibel Island. She and her husband had traded the harsh winters of Maine for days by the water on the island’s northern end. She loved their new life: the friends from church, the volunteering, the lush scenery.

Ian was Ms. Stevens’s first hurricane, sending her huddling with neighbors after the traffic jam of evacuees deterred her from leaving the island. They cared for her, making sure she was fed and able to safely leave after days without power and running water.

“If I was 50, I’d tough it out and say, I’m coming back. But I’m not 50 anymore,” Ms. Stevens said. “I will never live through another hurricane season.”

Now, she is debating selling her house altogether or returning to the snowbird lifestyle, moving closer to one of her daughters and spending only the winter months in the area.

But for the time being, she said, “I can’t make that decision. I’m still grieving.”

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HEADLINE	10/10 DHS seeks volunteers process Ukrainians
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/10/dhs-seeks-volunteers-process-ukrainians-critics-fe/
GIST	<p>Homeland Security is rushing to recruit volunteers from within its ranks to vet Americans who want to sponsor Ukrainians fleeing their country amid the ongoing war with Russia.</p> <p>The move is the latest sign that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is overwhelmed by the demands the Biden administration is placing on it, according to former officials who worry that the raw recruits are being sought to “rubber-stamp” all applications.</p> <p>The volunteers are supposed to carry out the Biden administration’s plan to welcome 100,000 Ukrainian migrants by connecting them with sponsors who have vowed to make sure the newcomers are financially supported and don’t become a burden on taxpayers.</p> <p>Volunteers will check out the would-be sponsors’ claims of financial backing.</p>

“This critical work ensures that U.S.-based supporters are vetted by USCIS and are able to support Ukrainian beneficiaries, who are seeking to be paroled into the United States,” USCIS, a Homeland Security agency, said in its plea for help.

Rob Law, former head of USCIS’ policy and strategy office in the Trump administration, said the call for volunteers shows the Biden team doesn’t “take the vetting seriously.”

He said there are people at USCIS who are trained to do this kind of work already, but they are working on other Biden administration priorities, like pushing to grant more green cards more quickly. That’s why the agency had to put out its cattle call for the Ukrainians.

“They’re just taking any willing body that’s employed at the agency and giving them 10 minutes of training and ‘Here you go,’” said Mr. Law, who is now director of the Center for Homeland Security and Immigration at the America First Policy Institute.

President Biden vowed to welcome Ukrainians with what’s known as “parole,” a permit to live and work in the U.S. for two years. It’s the same power used to bring 77,000 Afghans to the U.S. during the Biden administration’s chaotic airlift last year.

But unlike the Afghans, the Ukrainians are supposed to be sponsored by a U.S. citizen or legal resident who commits to supporting them financially for their duration here, providing housing assistance, health care and help in applying for government benefits or enrolling children in school.

Sponsors must prove they have sufficient income or funds to last the duration of parole and must surmount a background check to make sure there are no risks of human trafficking or exploitation.

Arriving Ukrainians don’t have to prove they’ve received a COVID-19 vaccination, but they do have to attest that they had a medical exam. They are not required to submit documentation before arrival.

Once here, they can apply for work permits, which entitle them to some taxpayer benefits.

USCIS declined to answer questions about the training the volunteers will get to vet the support applications, though it appears the lessons will be brief: The solicitation email that went out to employees called it “an initial training” and said volunteers would “start processing reviews the day after training has taken place.”

The agency says it has received 142,000 requests from would-be supporters.

About 100,000 Ukrainians have been authorized to come, and more than 64,000 have already been admitted under the effort, known as Uniting for Ukraine.

Another 99,000 Ukrainians have been admitted since March 24 through pathways outside Uniting for Ukraine.

USCIS wouldn’t say why it needed to turn to volunteers to help out, but it’s become a frequent solution under the Biden administration as the agency struggles to handle the workload Mr. Biden has foisted on it. That includes welcoming Afghans during last year’s airlift and helping with the border migrant surge that began at the start of the Biden administration.

Even as it takes on the new tasks, USCIS says it’s struggling financially and has had to ask Congress for an infusion of cash. USCIS is supposed to be funded through fees paid by immigrants themselves.

Biden officials have blamed the Trump administration for leaving the agency in financial straits.

	<p>But Mr. Law said the call for volunteers is more evidence that the problem wasn't Mr. Trump's management, but rather taking on too many missions it's not prepared for.</p> <p>"There is institutional failure within USCIS," Mr. Law said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/11 Japan fully opens borders to tourists
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/11/japan-opens-borders-to-tourists-as-last-pandemic-travel-restrictions-eased
GIST	<p>Japan has fully opened its doors to visitors after more than two years of pandemic isolation.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the country reinstated visa-free travel to dozens of countries, ending some of world's strictest Covid-19 border controls. Japan has also lifted the 50,000-person entry cap and ended the requirement for tourists to travel as part of tour groups, Kyodo news agency reported.</p> <p>Prime minister Fumio Kishida is counting on tourism to help invigorate the economy and reap some benefits from the yen's slide to a 24-year low – but hopes for a tourism boom face tough headwinds: a shortage of hospitality workers, lingering pandemic concerns, and predictions from economists that tourist returns would be gradual.</p> <p>Kishida said last week the government is aiming to attract 5tn yen (\$34.5bn) in annual tourist spending. That goal may be too ambitious for a sector that has withered during the pandemic.</p> <p>Spending from overseas visitors will reach only 2.1tn yen by 2023 and won't exceed pre-Covid levels until 2025, economist Takahide Kiuchi wrote in a Nomura Research Institute report.</p> <p>Since June, Japan has allowed tourists to visit in groups accompanied by guides, a requirement that was further relaxed to include self-guided package tours.</p> <p>Just over half a million visitors have come to Japan so far in 2022, compared with a record 31.8 million in 2019.</p> <p>Arata Sawa is among those eager for the return of foreign visitors, who previously comprised up to 90% of the guests at his traditional inn.</p> <p>"I'm hoping and anticipating that a lot of foreigners will come to Japan, just like before Covid," said Sawa, the third-generation owner of the Sawanoya ryokan in Tokyo.</p> <p>Flag carrier Japan Airlines Co has seen inbound bookings triple since the border easing announcement, president Yuji Akasaka told Nikkei newspaper last week – but international travel demand won't fully recover until around 2025.</p> <p>"I don't think there's going to be a sudden return to the pre-pandemic situation," said Sawato Shindo, president of Amina Collection Co, a 120-shop gift and souvenir chain.</p> <p>Hopes for tourism's roaring return are also tempered by a shortage of workers. Almost 73% of hotels nationwide said they were short of regular workers in August, up from about 27% a year earlier, according to market research firm Teikoku Databank.</p> <p>Akihisa Inaba, general manager at the hot-spring resort Yokikan in Shizuoka, central Japan, who said short staffing during the summer meant workers had to forego time off.</p> <p>"Naturally, the labour shortage will become more pronounced when inbound travel returns," said Inaba. "So, I'm not so sure we can be overjoyed."</p>

	<p>Whether overseas visitors will wear face masks and abide by other common infection controls in Japan is another concern. The strict border controls were broadly popular during most of the pandemic, and fears remain about the appearance of new viral variants.</p> <p>On Friday the government approved changing hotel regulations so that operators can refuse guests who do not obey infection controls during an outbreak.</p> <p>“From the start of the pandemic until now, we’ve had just a few foreign guests,” said Tokyo innkeeper Sawa. “Pretty much all of them wore masks, but I’m really not sure whether the people who visit from here on will do the same.”</p> <p>One force that may buoy the return of visitors is the drop of the yen: the yen has weakened sharply against the dollar, giving some visitors much heftier buying power and making Japan attractive to bargain hunters targeting Japan’s electronics, luxury goods and retail districts.</p> <p>In Tokyo’s Akihabara electronics district, Hideyuki Abe’s shelves filled with watches and souvenirs like samurai swords and toy cats with bobbing heads. Abe employs about 50 people and had resorted to layoffs after the pandemic struck in 2020. Some Akihabara shops have closed down since then, but he bided his time.</p> <p>“Hanging on is where power lies,” Abe said. “Now, I am a bit worried about a shortage of workers.”</p> <p>With pandemic restrictions waning and the dollar at a three-decade high of about 145 yen, he believes the tourists will be back.</p> <p>“This time,” he says, “it’s a perfect opportunity.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/11 Day 230 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/11/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-230-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 19 people are reported to have been killed and 105 injured, Ukraine’s Emergency Services said in an update on Tuesday morning, after Russia launched a massive wave of strikes targeting cities across Ukraine. Many of the locations hit by cruise missiles and kamikaze drones during the morning rush hour appeared to be solely civilian sites or key pieces of infrastructure, apparently chosen to terrorise Ukrainians. • Russian president Vladimir Putin said the wave of strikes on Ukraine was in response to the attack on the Kerch bridge linking Russia and Crimea. The Russian leader warned of even more “severe retaliation” in the event of further Ukrainian attacks. “Let there be no doubt,” Putin said in televised comments addressed to his security council, “if attempts at terrorist attacks continue, the response from Russia will be severe.” • Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy said his country was “dealing with terrorists” and accused Russia of targeting power facilities and civilians following the missile attacks. “They deliberately chose such a time, such goals, in order to cause as much harm as possible,” the Ukrainian leader said. • US president Joe Biden said the US “strongly condemns” the Russian missile strikes on cities across Ukraine, which demonstrate Putin’s “utter brutality” against the Ukrainian people. In a separate statement, the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said the international community “has a responsibility” to make clear that Putin’s actions are “completely unacceptable”. • The UN’s secretary general, António Guterres, said he was “deeply shocked” by the Russian air strikes. This morning’s attacks “constitute another unacceptable escalation of the war and, as always, civilians are paying the highest price,” UN spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said. • The United Nations general assembly voted to reject Russia’s call for the 193-member body to hold a secret ballot later this week on whether to condemn Moscow’s move to annex four partially occupied regions in Ukraine.

The assembly decided, with 107 votes in favour, that it would hold a public vote – not a secret ballot – on a draft resolution that condemns Russia’s “illegal so-called referenda” and the “attempted illegal annexation”. Diplomats said the vote on the resolution would likely be on Wednesday or Thursday.

- **Nato’s secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, condemned the “[horrific and indiscriminate](#)” missile attacks by Russia on civilian targets in Ukraine.** The president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said she was “[shocked and appalled](#)”. Her European Council counterpart, Charles Michel, unequivocally labelled the actions by Russia [as war crimes](#).
- **Members of the Group of Seven, and Zelenskiy, will hold emergency talks on Tuesday,** a German government spokesperson has confirmed. Zelenskiy [confirmed he would address G7 leaders](#), adding that he had spoken to Germany’s chancellor, Olaf Scholz, about increasing pressure on Russia as well as aid for Ukraine.
- **The Belarusian president, Alexander Lukashenko, said Belarus and Russia would deploy a joint military task force on the country’s western borders** in response to what he called an aggravation of tension. The two countries had started pulling forces together two days ago, apparently after the explosion on Russia’s bridge to Crimea, [Lukashenko was quoted as saying](#). Poland has released [guidance](#) advising its citizens in Belarus to leave the country.
- **The former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev has been included on a list of wanted persons put together by [Ukraine](#) security officials.** A statement released by Ukraine’s security service, the SBU, said Medvedev, now deputy chairman of Russia’s Security, was wanted under a section of the criminal code dealing with attempts to undermine Ukraine’s territorial integrity and the inviolability of its borders. Most of the Russian Security Council’s members are on the list.
- **The International Committee of the Red Cross [has confirmed](#) its teams have paused their field work in Ukraine for security reasons.** The Norwegian Refugee Council [have also said](#) that it has paused its aid operations in Ukraine until it is safe to resume. “Our aid workers are hiding from a barrage of bombs and in fear of repeated attacks,” it said.
- **The president of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, will visit Moscow on Tuesday to meet Putin,** UAE state media reported. Mohamed “will discuss with President Putin the friendly relations between the UAE and Russia along with a number of regional and international issues and developments of common interest”, the UAE’s state-owned news agency WAM said.
- **Putin may meet Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at a summit in Kazakhstan this week.** The Kremlin spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, [told reporters it was “possible”](#) the pair could discuss a Turkish proposal to host talks between Russia and the west on Ukraine.
- **Zelenskiy said Ukraine “[counts on Britain’s leadership](#)” after a phone call with the UK prime minister, Liz Truss, on Monday.** Zelenskiy’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, [said he also spoke with his UK counterpart](#), James Cleverly, who assured him of Britain’s unwavering support of Ukraine.
- **The European Union has announced it will extend a bloc-wide protection scheme for Ukrainian refugees into 2024.** Ukrainians in the EU who choose to return to their country [will still be able to maintain their refugee status](#), as long as they notify the relevant EU country of their move, according to the EU’s home affairs commissioner, Ylva Johansson.

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HEADLINE	10/08 Day 227 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/08/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-227-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Kerch bridge from Russia to Crimea – a hated symbol of the Kremlin’s occupation of the southern Ukrainian peninsular – has been hit by a massive explosion on the span that carries railway traffic. Images from the bridge showed a fiercely burning fire engulfing at least two railway carriages from a train on the bridge, accompanied by a vast column of black smoke. • A series of explosions shook Kharkiv early on Saturday, sending towering plumes of smoke into the sky and triggering a series of secondary explosions in the eastern Ukraine city. Associated

Press reported there were no immediate reports of casualties. The blasts came hours after Russia concentrated attacks on areas it illegally annexed.

- **Volodymyr Zelenskiy says Russian officials have begun to “prepare their society” for the possible use of nuclear weapons** in the war. The Ukrainian president denied having called for strikes on Russia, urging instead that pre-emptive sanctions be imposed on Moscow, in an [interview with the BBC](#).
- **Russia has targeted Zaporizhzhia with explosive-packed “kamikaze drones” for the first time**, as the death toll from [a missile strike on an apartment building](#) in the city rose to 11. The regional governor, Oleksandr Starukh, said Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones damaged two infrastructure facilities in the city. He said other missiles also struck the city again, injuring one person. The Iranian foreign ministry has denied supplying the drones to [Russia](#).
- **The Russian justice ministry has declared one of the country’s most popular rappers to be a “foreign agent”**, a designation that has been used to harass Kremlin critics and journalists. Oxxxymiron – real name Miron Fyodorov – was [added to a list of foreign agents](#) alongside four journalists and Dmitry Glukhovsky, a prominent writer. The rapper has called the Kremlin’s Ukraine offensive a “catastrophe and a crime”.
- **Ukrainian authorities found a mass grave in the recently recaptured eastern town of Lyman** in Donetsk and it was unclear yet how many bodies it held, the regional governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko, said in an online post on Friday. Separately, the Ukrinform news agency cited a senior police official as saying the grave contained 180 bodies.
- **The bodies of 534 civilians including 19 children were found in the north-eastern Kharkiv region** since Russian troops left, Serhiy Bolvinov of the national police in Kharkiv said. That included 447 bodies found in Izium. He also said investigators had found evidence of 22 sites being used as “torture rooms”.
- **Zelenskiy said Ukrainian forces have recaptured nearly 2,500 sq km (965 sq miles) of territory** from Russia in the counteroffensive that began late last month. “This week alone, our soldiers liberated 776 square kilometres of territory in the east of our country and 29 settlements, including six in Lugansk region,” the Ukrainian president said on Friday.
- **Russia has reportedly sacked the commander of its eastern military district, Col Gen Alexander Chaiko**, the news outlet RBC has reported. His reported departure marks the latest in a series of top officials to be fired after defeats and humiliations in the war in [Ukraine](#).
- **Joe Biden has warned the world could face “Armageddon” if Vladimir Putin uses a tactical nuclear weapon to try to win the war in Ukraine**. The US president made his most outspoken remarks to date about the [threat of nuclear war](#), saying it was the closest the world had come to nuclear catastrophe for 60 years, “since Kennedy and the Cuban missile crisis”.
- **The US does not have indications that Russia is preparing to imminently use nuclear weapons, the White House said**. Asked about Biden’s comments, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said: “He was reinforcing what we have been saying, which is how seriously ... we take these threats.”
- **[The 2022 Nobel peace prize has been awarded](#) to human rights advocate Ales Bialiatski from Belarus, the Russian human rights organisation Memorial and the Ukrainian human rights organisation Centre for Civil Liberties**. Oleksandra Matviychuk, the centre’s head, said on Facebook after the award that Vladimir Putin as well as the Belarusian leader, Alexander Lukashenko, and other “war criminals” should face an international tribunal, and Russia should be excluded from the UN security council “for systematic violations of the UN charter”.
- **The International Monetary Fund has announced it will provide \$1.3bn in emergency aid** to Ukraine through its new food crisis assistance program.
- **A member of Putin’s inner circle directly confronted the Russian president over mistakes and failings** in the war in Ukraine, the Washington Post has reported, citing US intelligence.
- **At least five people were killed and as many injured after Ukrainian forces struck a bus** while shelling a strategically important bridge in the Russian-controlled part of Ukraine’s southern Kherson region, Russia’s Tass news agency has reported.
- The armed forces’ headquarters of the self-proclaimed **Donetsk People’s Republic has claimed to have captured three settlements** from Ukrainian forces in Donetsk.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The office of Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, said after a call with Putin that the pair discussed the latest developments in Ukraine, and Erdoğan repeated Ankara’s willingness to do its part to peacefully resolve the war. • The North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, has congratulated Putin on his 70th birthday, applauding him for his “distinguished leadership and strong will”. Kim spoke of Putin’s achievements in “building powerful Russia” and said the Russian leader was “enjoying high respects and support from the broad masses of people”.
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HEADLINE	10/10 Alaska cancels king, snow crab harvests
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/conservation-concerns-cancel-alaskas-bering-snow-king-crab-seasons/
GIST	<p>Alaska officials have canceled the fall Bristol Bay red king crab harvest, and in a first-ever move, also scuttled the winter harvest of smaller snow crab.</p> <p>The move is a double whammy to a fleet from Alaska, Washington and Oregon pursuing Bering Sea crab in harvests that as recently as 2016 grossed \$280 million.</p> <p>“I am struggling for words. This is so unbelievable that this is happening,” said Jamie Goen, executive director of the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers. “We have third-generation fishermen who are going to go out of business.”</p> <p>The closures reflect conservation concerns about both crab species in the aftermath of bleak summer populations surveys. The tough decisions to shut down the snow crab and fall king crab harvests came after days of discussions by Alaska Department of Fish and Game biologists and senior agency officials who faced crabbers’ pleas for at least small fisheries.</p> <p>“Management of Bering Sea snow crab must now focus on conservation and rebuilding given the conditions of the stock,” the department said in a Monday statement announcing the snow crab cancellation.</p> <p>Snow crab populations collapsed in the aftermath of a 2019 Bering Sea warming that scrambled the broader marine ecosystem, and last year’s snow crab harvest of 5.6 million pounds was the smallest in more than 40 years.</p> <p>Scientists are still researching the causes of the snow crab population collapse, which likely include increased predation as well as stresses from the warmer water that caused crabs’ metabolisms to increase and could have led to starvation.</p> <p>Alaska, within the limits of a federal management plan that comes up with an allowable biological catch, determines how many crab are caught.</p> <p>A scientific model of the snow crab population reviewed last week by the federal North Pacific Fishery Management Council indicated there may have been enough this year for another small harvest. But Ben Daly, an Alaska Department of Fish and Game research coordinator, said the model has struggled to account for the dramatic population decline after the 2019 warming, and state officials were concerned it might not be accurate.</p> <p>“We have extreme conservation concerns about the population. We have serious doubts about the model,” Daly said.</p> <p>The fall red king crab harvest was canceled for the second year in a row — a move that reflects the low number of mature female crab, which although not targeted in the harvest, are an indicator of the broader health of a stock that has been in long-term decline. The survey needs to find at least 8.4 million mature females to greenlight a harvest, and the 2022 survey, though it showed a light improvement from 2021, still fell below that level, according to Daly.</p>

Fisheries that accidentally catch Bristol Bay king and snow crab will continue, so far, without new restrictions.

These include pot fisheries targeting cod and bottom trawlers that net yellowfin sole and other fish.

Trawlers that pursue pollock with large nets that bounce along the bottom, potentially harming crab, also do not face new restrictions.

Trawl industry officials say they already have taken some measures to reduce their impacts on Bering Sea crab.

Chris Woodley, executive director of the Groundfish Forum that represents the trawl fleet that pursues yellowfin sole, said operators have modified nets to reduce impacts, and this past year faced new area restrictions as well as a reduction in the number of crab that can be brought up in the nets as bycatch.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council sets allocations and harvest rules for Bering Sea trawlers, which are then implemented — and enforced — by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Goen of the Alaska Bering Crabbers hopes the council might approve some new protections requested by her group at a December meeting.

But she has been frustrated by the council's slow-moving process, and her group's inability during the past year to get more done by the council to limit the crab bycatch in other harvests.

“(Owners of) Vessels are having to make choices, and with little or no income: some will sell, some will go bankrupt and others will defer maintenance. Safety concerns will only increase as we lose long-time, experienced crew in crab fisheries that know how to keep people safe on deck,” Goen wrote in a Sept. 30 letter to council chair Simon Kinneen.

“The reality is that the council failed to act despite the warning signs.”

Also on Monday, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game announced a small Bering Sea crab harvest of more than 2 million pounds of tanner crab will open Oct. 16.

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HEADLINE	10/10 Seattle metro household income 4 th highest
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/seattle-jumps-to-fourth-highest-household-income-among-large-metros/
GIST	<p>A couple weeks ago, I wrote about Seattle's median household income hitting a record \$110,000. But the growing affluence isn't confined to city limits.</p> <p>Census Bureau data shows the median household income for our entire metro area also hit a record high last year, at \$101,700. That's up from \$94,000 in 2019 — an 8.2% increase, not adjusted for inflation. The Seattle metro area includes King, Pierce and Snohomish counties.</p> <p>The bureau did not release 2020 income figures for metro areas due to difficulties in data collection during the pandemic.</p> <p>Nationally, the median household income was \$69,700 last year. The median represents the midway point — in other words, half the households earned less and half earned more.</p> <p>Among the 100 largest metro areas in the U.S., the Seattle area had the fourth-highest median household income, trailing only the San Jose, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. metros. In 2019, the Seattle</p>

metro ranked sixth for income — we leapfrogged two New England metros to move into fourth place: Boston and Bridgeport, Connecticut.

For some perspective on the area's fast-growing affluence, consider that in 2010 — not very long ago — Seattle only ranked 11th among the 100 largest metros. The median household income then was \$63,100. Among the large metro areas with higher medians than Seattle in 2010 were Baltimore and Poughkeepsie, New York.

Between 2019 and 2021, the biggest increase in median household income among large metros was in Stockton, California, up nearly 17% to \$80,700. Only one large metro saw incomes decline: Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where the median fell by 4% to \$58,300.

The smallest increase among the 99 metros where incomes grew was in San Francisco — up just 1.1%, to \$116,000.

Census data shows there were nearly 1.6 million households in the Seattle metro area in 2021. Households, as defined by the census, include all types of housing except “group quarters,” such as college dorms, shelters, nursing homes, prisons, military barracks and so on.

A household can be a family, a single person or a group of unrelated people (such as roommates or unmarried partners). And naturally, there are differences in income between these various household types.

The household type with the highest median income in the Seattle metro was a married couple with children, at around \$156,000. At the other end of the spectrum, for women living alone, the median income was \$47,100, and for men living alone, it was \$56,400.

Among racial/ethnic groups, households headed by an Asian person had the highest median income at \$132,900. White (non-Hispanic) households had the next highest, at \$104,000. The medians for households headed by a Native American or Black person were the lowest, at \$64,300 and \$63,200, respectively.

Household income includes contributions by all members of the household, whether related or not, age 15 and older. Of course, wages are a major part of household income, but it also includes interest, dividends, income from rental properties, royalties, public assistance and disability and retirement incomes (Social Security, pensions, etc.).

Because household income includes the contributions of everyone in the household, a larger household with two or more working adults can easily have a higher household income than an individual who lives alone, even if that individual has a high salary.

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HEADLINE	10/10 Rape conviction tossed: bias jury selection
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/wa-supreme-court-overturns-black-mans-rape-conviction-over-bias-in-jury-selection/
GIST	<p>The Washington Supreme Court has unanimously overturned the rape conviction of a Black man in King County, finding the trial judge improperly turned aside objections from the man's lawyer, who claimed prosecutors may have dismissed two prospective jurors of color due to racial bias.</p> <p>The justices, in a 21-page opinion invoking a state judicial rule that's the first of its kind nationwide, vacated Amanuel Tesfasilasye's third-degree rape conviction and sent his case back to King County Superior Court to be retried, settled by plea agreement or dismissed.</p> <p>The ruling overturned an opinion by Division I of the Washington Court of Appeals, which had upheld the trial court's rulings and Tesfasilasye's conviction.</p>

Chief Justice Steven González wrote that the lower courts had misapplied the standard that the Supreme Court had adopted in its test to determine whether race could have been a factor in the decision by prosecutors to strike those two prospective jurors from the jury pool.

“Racial bias has long infected our jury selection process,” González wrote, explaining that the Supreme Court in 2018 adopted a rule making discrimination during the process more difficult. The final rule, called General Rule 37 (GR37), was the result of years of negotiations and hearings, according to a “friend of the court” brief filed by the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington, the King County Department of Public Defense and others.

Tesfasilasye was represented by attorneys from the Washington Appellate Project.

Gregory Link, the project’s director, said his organization is seeing more challenges to the jury selection process since GR37 took effect three years ago.

“This rule is one-of-a-kind, and a long time in the making,” he said. “It adds another accountability tool to the system.”

The rule applies to a portion of the jury selection process called “peremptory challenges” which, González explained, “parties may use ... to strike a limited number of otherwise qualified jurors from the venire” without explanation. “These challenges have a history of being used based largely or entirely on racial stereotypes or generalizations,” he wrote.

When an attorney invokes a GR37 objection to a peremptory challenge, the trial judge is required to deny the challenge if, given the circumstances, they determine that an “objective observer could view race or ethnicity as a factor” in making the challenge.

Under the Supreme Court rule, an “objective observer” is someone “who is aware that implicit, institutional and unconscious biases, in addition to purposeful discrimination, have resulted in the unfair exclusion of potential jurors in Washington State.”

In Tesfasilasye’s case, King County prosecutors challenged and struck from the jury an Asian woman and Latino man over the GR37 objection of Tesfasilasye’s defense attorney.

The justices said the trial judge rejected those objections after concluding King County Superior Court Judge Kristin Richardson “did not believe an objective observer ‘would think’ that this was a race base challenged,” González wrote.

“GR37 is clear, the court’s determination should be based on whether an objective observer ‘could’ view race as a factor, not whether it would,” he concluded.

Tesfasilasye worked in 2017 as a driver for Solid Ground, a company that contracts with King County Access Transportation to transport people living with disabilities, according to court documents. A county transportation client claimed Tesfasilasye took her to her door, as was common practice, then followed her inside and sexually assaulted her, court documents say.

Tesfasilasye was convicted of third-degree rape and sentenced to one year in jail.

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HEADLINE	10/09 Office workers return to downtown Seattle?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/seattles-downtown-needs-office-workers-do-workers-need-offices/
GIST	To a casual visitor, the 56-floor Two Union Square building looks well ahead of the pack in downtown Seattle’s slow march back to the office.

At lunchtime, the food court of the sleek, zebra-striped tower at Union Street and Sixth Avenue bustles with employees from the 200-plus tenants in Two Union and its smaller sister, One Union Square. The vast underground garage below is nearly full again.

But like many Seattle offices, Two Union Square is still missing most of its workers — another unsettling sign for a downtown recovery that has been largely on hold since COVID-19 sent most office employees home in early 2020.

Any given day, the number of workers in the two buildings, though roughly doubled from this spring, is still only around 40% of pre-pandemic levels, says Mark Barbieri, executive vice president at Washington Holdings, which manages the complex.

And some tenants report much lower rates. Seattle-based HomeStreet Bank, whose headquarters take up parts of five floors at Two Union, has around 20% of its 300-person staff working in person, says CEO Mark Mason, even though senior management would love “to have everyone physically back.”

At the Seattle office of recruiting firm Robert Half, on the 43rd floor, occupancy is still 15% to 20%, says district president Josh Warborg.

And like many downtown office towers, both One and Two Union Square are seeing remote work’s other, second-order effects.

Many tenants are so uncertain about when and whether remote workers are returning that they’re hedging decisions about office space that, for larger tenants, can cost millions of dollars a year. Some are opting for shorter leases, Barbieri says. More than half are considering downsizing.

HomeStreet, for example, has nearly seven years left on its lease, so a smaller office “is only theoretical at this point,” says Mason. But if headquarters staff remains mainly hybrid or remote, “we would cut our space by more than half,” Mason says.

“There’s still so much uncertainty,” Barbieri adds. Employers “are still trying to understand what all of this means.”

Workerless in Seattle

It’s a familiar conversation across the Seattle-area office ecosystem.

Despite repeated campaigns to lure back remote workers — and despite predictions that the start of another school year would unleash a wave of returnees — much of the Seattle area’s office return is stuck in a limbo.

Just 36% of downtown Seattle’s office workers were back as of last week, according to cellphone data posted by the Downtown Seattle Association. That’s actually down 10 percentage points from mid-July — and among the worst back-to-office performances of any major U.S. city.

Seattle’s stalled return is [playing havoc with remote workers](#) and creating unprecedented HR problems for their employers. Some, like [Amazon](#), have had to postpone or scale back office return goals. Others, such as [Boeing](#) and the [city of Seattle](#), have pushed ahead with mandatory back-to-office policies, but now face employee backlashes.

More broadly, Seattle’s lagging return is raising questions about the office economy and the businesses — from [restaurants and shops](#) to commercial real estate firms — that counted on steady demand for new office space and a steady supply of workers to fill them.

In September, more than a fifth of the office space in Seattle’s central business district was available, or nearly two-and-a-half times pre-pandemic levels, according to Savills, a commercial real estate firm that

represents tenants. In August, interest in new Seattle-area office leases by prospective tenants plunged 14%, the third-biggest decline among major U.S. cities, according to the VTS Office Demand Index.

Few are ready to call the end of the office or the death of downtowns. But few are eager to predict when the office might return to its pre-pandemic status.

After more than two years of pandemic, “I would have thought ... that we’d have some sort of consensus” about a return timeline, says Andrew Shultz, a senior director at commercial real estate firm Cushman & Wakefield who works primarily with Seattle-area office landlords.

Instead, he says, Seattle’s office return still “feels like it’s a grand experiment that we’re living in real time.”

What’s behind Seattle’s lag?

The Seattle area isn’t the only metro struggling to get its remote workers back.

Seattle’s average workplace occupancy rate for July was actually better than two of what the Downtown Seattle Association calls “peer” cities — Los Angeles and San Francisco — and was barely behind Portland.

But in a more national comparison, Seattle ranked just 27th out of 31 large North American metros, according to cellphone-data study this spring by The Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

Experts and industry officials see several factors behind Seattle’s slow office return.

Cities such as Seattle where employers sent workers home early in the pandemic often have struggled more to get those workers back, according to Mark Ein, chair of Kastle Systems, a security firm that tracks office worker presence via key card use at office towers.

Similarly, cities like Seattle that rely heavily on public transit often have seen slow office returns, in part because, despite the waning pandemic, many office workers are still “more comfortable [commuting] in their own car than they are in a subway or a bus,” Ein says.

Also lagging: metro areas with lots of tech firms. Tech workers shifted relatively easily to remote work and the tight tech labor market has given them more say over whether to come back.

One big, if hard to quantify factor: Employers that mandated some degree of in-office work typically have higher workplace occupancy than do those which kept things voluntary.

T-Mobile, [which last fall announced that most remote employees had to return to the office](#) at least half the time, currently has a workplace occupancy rate of around half in its Bellevue headquarters, company officials say.

At the other end of the policy spectrum are employers with minimal in-office requirements — and low workplace occupancy. Last fall, Seattle-based Weyerhaeuser [postponed reopening its Pioneer Square headquarters](#) and now requires its more than 650 HQ staff to come in just one or two days a week. Workplace occupancy is around 10% to 20%, says spokesperson Karl Wirsing.

Amazon, which initially emphasized a [“return to an office-centric culture as our baseline,” and planned to bring back workers starting in fall 2021](#), also since [adopted a more relaxed stance](#) — in part, industry watchers say, to avoid losing workers. The tech giant won’t disclose occupancy numbers, but employees at several of Amazon’s downtown office towers estimated average daily occupancy to be between 20% and 40%, with spikes on meeting days.

Likewise at HomeStreet, which is forgoing any in-office mandates partly out of fear of losing workers in an ultratight job market. “We’ve been very soft about it so far,” CEO Mason says.

‘A lot of right-sizing’

Interestingly, while Weyerhaeuser initially cited employees’ safety concerns about the Pioneer Square area when it delayed reopening, the current low occupancy is also driven by employees’ more familiar back-to-office concerns around commuting, schedule flexibility and the like, Wirsing says. Those factors may become even more salient as the company begins “evaluating what’s the next phase of pandemic.”

That’s an evaluation many employers are making — and one that, collectively, may bring a marked shift in office strategies.

In late 2021 and much of 2022, many Seattle-area employers tried a slew of enticements to get remote workers back in the office — among them, free parking, commuting stipends, gourmet lunches and appealingly redesigned offices.

But over the past year, some employers have watched those strategies deliver lower-than-expected results or stall out.

“We tried for three days a week in-office, but most are still just doing two, even after we offered to pay for their parking,” says Erica Murray, office manager at Two Union tenant Horizon Realty Advisors. Office occupancy now averages around 36%, with higher rates on Mondays and Wednesdays.

As a result, some employers have shifted to strategies that are more defensive.

“The return-to-office has failed to materialize in a lot of ways,” says Trevor Youngren, a Cushman & Wakefield senior director who helps tenants find office space in the Seattle area. Instead, he says, many employers “are now looking more long-term and trying to figure out what their space needs are going to be.”

While some are taking advantage of Seattle’s softening office market to lock in previously unaffordable long-term office leases, many others, especially small and midsize employers, are opting for shorter leases.

Consider: In the second quarter of 2022, the length of a new lease in Seattle’s central business district averaged just 3.6 years, down 33% from the second quarter of 2019, according to a Cushman & Wakefield analysis.

Many employers are also shrinking their office footprint.

So far in 2022, new office leases in Seattle’s central business district have averaged 8,960 square feet, down 26% from the 2015-19 average, Cushman data shows. For comparison, the average office lease in Bellevue’s central business district shrank 50% in length and 20% in size over the same periods.

And some tenants are dealing with remote work’s enduring popularity by ditching the office altogether.

Seattle-based nonprofit Sightline Institute was considering trading its offices, in downtown’s historic Vance Building, for a fully remote model before the pandemic. But “when everybody started working from home and it seemed to work OK and people liked it, it made the decision easier,” says Dan Bertolet, Sightline’s director of housing and urbanism.

Defensive moves like these mean more downward pressure for a local office market that was already struggling. “It is definitely a tenant’s market and will be for the foreseeable future,” says Eric Lonergan, Savills’ executive managing director.

Office market downturns typically are worse for older, lower-quality buildings, which often lack amenities such as parking or food courts. But this one is also hitting many high-end Class A properties, especially in downtown Seattle.

At the recently renovated Two Union Square, for example, vacancy is around 9%, up slightly from before the pandemic, Barbieri says. That doesn't include space current tenants are trying to sublease as they shrink their office footprint.

"It certainly is a salient trend," he says, of many tenants' interest in smaller spaces. "There is a lot of right-sizing going on."

'The die has been cast'

For now, many Seattle-area employers are stuck.

At HomeStreet, company officials want another year or so to see whether more workers come back, says Craig Kennedy, who oversees the bank's real estate. Kennedy thinks the bank's workplace occupancy could eventually recover to 40% or even 50%, but concedes that "it's going take a while to get there."

Other employers are banking that a possible recession and a weaker labor market will give employers more leverage over where their employees work.

But some employers worry that Seattle's office return has largely run its course. After years of false starts and failed forecasts — most recently, the non-surge after school started last month — some expect only incremental increases.

At the Robert Half offices in Two Union Square, the firm's workplace occupancy rate is already close to its new normal, Warborg says.

"If you call me again in a year, maybe it's marginally higher," he allows, but adds that employees are already coming in as often as they want or need to.

"I think the die has been cast on a lot of this," Warborg says. "People have created their new lifestyle and that's the way that they're going to do it."

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HEADLINE	10/10 Mariners ALDS ticket resale market spikes
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/sports/mlb/seattle-mariners/resale-market-explodes-mariners-alds-tickets/ABPQARKR5BE23FSVGGY2PH5VRE/
GIST	<p>Fans who don't have tickets and are vying to go to the American League Division Series are in for a surprise.</p> <p>Tickets are sold out for the two home games, Games 3 and 4, and the resale market for tickets has exploded.</p> <p>Postseason tickets for all possible home games went on sale Sept. 29 and quickly sold out.</p> <p>Fans paid ticket prices starting at \$60 for the upper deck for Saturday's Game 3, but fans looking to get the same tickets for resale could be paying well over \$300 each, according to seatgeek.com.</p> <p>Good lower bowl tickets start at around \$500, with prices for Diamond Club seats peaking at \$3,498 each.</p> <p>Other sites, such as venuekings.com, show a vastly different story for away games in Houston: Fans can get tickets for Game 1 of the series in Houston for as low as \$32 each.</p>

	It's almost cheaper to grab a flight to Houston and watch the Mariners on the road.
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HEADLINE	10/10 Smoke continues to linger in Puget Sound
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/smoke-continues-to-linger-in-the-puget-sound-when-will-the-air-begin-to-clear#
GIST	<p>The itchy eyes and constant campfire smell in the air are no thanks to the stagnant wildfire smoke over the Puget Sound region. The eastern part of King County, in particular, dealt with some of the worst air quality this weekend and on Monday, the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency said that the air quality in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties was "unhealthy for sensitive groups."</p> <p>We'll be breathing easier by Monday evening as a cleansing ocean breeze acts to rid our atmosphere of the smoke.</p> <p>Wildfire smoke will try to make a comeback for a time Wednesday but could get pushed east again with onshore flow Thursday into Friday.</p> <p>Fingers crossed; the subtle onshore flow is enough to keep the wildfire smoke at bay for the Mariners to host the Astros on home turf this weekend. However, more high pressure and dry weather could mean smoky conditions.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/11 Israel, Lebanon 'historic' sea border deal
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-historic-sea-border-deal-struck-lebanon-91321498
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM -- Israel's prime minister said Tuesday that the country has reached an "historic agreement" with neighboring Lebanon over their shared maritime border after months of U.S.-brokered negotiations.</p> <p>Premier Yair Lapid called the deal an "historic achievement that will strengthen Israel's security, inject billions into Israel's economy, and ensure the stability of our northern border."</p> <p>The agreement is expected to enable additional natural gas production in the Mediterranean. Lebanon hopes gas exploration will help lift its country out of its spiraling economic crisis.</p> <p>Lebanon and Israel have been officially at war since Israel's creation in 1948 and both countries claim some 860 square kilometers (330 square miles) of the Mediterranean Sea.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Problem: barges idling on Mississippi River
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/barges-idling-mississippi-river-sign-supply-chain-woes/story?id=91300170
GIST	<p>The image of barges idling along the Mississippi River could be indicative of future economic woes should the drought conditions in the Midwest continue to worsen, according to experts.</p> <p>The lower-than-usual water levels on one of the most important trade routes in the middle of the continental U.S. is causing vessels such as shipping containers, recreational boaters and even cruise lines to stall in mud and sand that was previously covered in ample river water.</p> <p>While barges stuck on sandbars are not all that unusual for this time of year, experts told ABC News, water levels in the lower half of the Mississippi River are nearing record levels in some areas near and south of the Tennessee-Arkansas border, according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration</p> <p>Last week, there were nearly 150 vessels and more than 2,250 barges in a queue to float through stretches of the Mississippi River near Memphis Vicksburg, Mississippi, where traffic jams had ensued, the U.S. Coast Guard announced in a statement.</p>

Much of the region surrounding the Mississippi River is experiencing conditions between abnormally dry and severe drought, according to the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#). Regions along the river from Minnesota to Louisiana have been receiving below-average rainfall since August, Mohsen Tahmasebi Nasab, an assistant professor of engineering at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, who has researched the Mississippi River extensively, told ABC News.

The drought so far is not "atypical" in the Midwest, as these conditions tend to occur about once a decade, Jonathan Remo, an associate professor at Southern Illinois University's School of Earth Systems and Sustainability, told ABC News.

The last time the Mississippi River saw water levels this low was in 2012, and the biggest drought in recent decades occurred in 1988, Remo said.

However, considering how early in the season it is, the Mississippi could potentially reach record-low levels if the region does not start to receive significant rain events in the coming weeks, Remo added.

"We're not at record yet," he said. "But the potential is there."

Photos Nasab took of the Minnehaha Falls in Minneapolis in May show a gushing waterfall, but images from the same spot in September showed that the waterfall almost dried up due to the lack of rain, he said.

The drought in Minnesota has been a prolonged trend that began in 2021, Nasab said.

The Mississippi River is an essential trade route in the region. Right now is the start of the prime time for grains to move down the river and ship for export through New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico following the fall harvest, Remo said. In addition, goods like cement, gravel and fuel also frequent the river waters.

Remo expects supply chain delays for many of these goods in the foreseeable future, he said.

The water levels will likely get worse, and recede even more, before they begin to rise again, Remo said.

The core of the Mississippi River is what helps the river maintain water, making it navigable for those large vessels, Remo said. Once the larger sub-basins scattered along the Mississippi are shut off for the winter, usually beginning in early November, those water levels could recede even lower, resulting in more headaches for the supply chain, he said.

"If that happens, we'll really see it back up, and a potential shutdown of portions of the river for navigation," Remo said.

The consequences of a constantly stalled Mississippi River trade route will be "significant" for hydrology, water resources, engineering, commerce and the economy, Nasab said.

"This is going to interrupt this already broken supply chain, and it's going to exacerbate the situation from the commerce and economic perspectives of the river," he said.

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HEADLINE	10/10 Hurricane Ian death toll continues to rise
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/multiple-deaths-reported-hurricane-ian-slams-florida/story?id=90693636
GIST	<p>At least 120 people in Florida have died due to Hurricane Ian, according to local officials, as the death toll continues to climb nearly two weeks after the powerful storm slammed into the state's southwestern coast.</p> <p>Five additional people were also reported dead due to the storm in North Carolina, according to the governor's office.</p>

The Category 4 storm made landfall in Florida the afternoon of Sept. 28, causing catastrophic damage, fierce winds and dangerous, record-breaking storm surges.

Deaths from Hurricane Ian reported in Florida

The deaths span multiple counties in Florida, including 56 in Lee County and 24 in Charlotte County. There were also seven in Monroe County; six in Sarasota County; five each in Volusia and Collier counties; four in Hardee County; three each in Manatee and Putnam counties; two in Polk County; and one each in Hendry, Hillsborough, Lake, Martin and Osceola counties, ABC News has determined based on information from the Florida Medical Examiners Commission and inquiries with local officials and authorities.

Lee County Sheriff Carmine Marceno said during a press conference Monday that officers were still conducting more than 600 well-being checks.

Hurricane Ian's death toll has been rising amid ongoing search and rescue missions.

The causes of the deaths in Florida were primarily drownings, as well as two vehicle accidents and a roofing accident, officials said.

Confirmed deaths from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement occurred in Lake, Sarasota, Manatee, Volusia and Collier counties between Sept. 27 and 30. The victims ranged in age from 22 to 91. One, a 68-year-old woman, drowned after being swept into the ocean by a wave on Sept. 29, the department said.

The Volusia County Sheriff's Office was among the first to publicly announce a fatality from Ian. A 72-year-old man in Deltona died after attempting to drain his pool during the storm, the office [said Thursday](#).

The man, who was not publicly identified, "disappeared" after heading outside, the sheriff's office said. Deputies found him unresponsive in a canal behind the home and he was pronounced dead at a local hospital, the sheriff's office said.

Deaths from Hurricane Ian reported in North Carolina

The storm made landfall again on Sept. 30 in South Carolina, which has reported no deaths due to the storm so far, Gov. Henry McMaster said Saturday.

Though in neighboring North Carolina, five storm-related deaths have been reported. In a [statement](#) Saturday, Gov. Roy Cooper said three involved vehicle accidents on Sept. 30, with the victims ranging in age from 22 to 25. Additionally, a 65-year-old man died on Oct. 1 from carbon monoxide poisoning after running a generator in his closed garage while the power was out. The manner of the fifth death is unclear.

Hurricane damage across the Southeast, as rescue efforts continue

Florida Rep. Kathy Castor, who represents the Tampa Bay area, called the situation a "major catastrophe."

"I'm afraid we're going to be dealing with a larger loss of life than we anticipated," she said on ["ABC News Live"](#) on Sept. 29.

Florida Sen. Rick Scott told "Good Morning America" on Sept. 29 there were "thousands of rescue efforts going on right now."

"We've got great sheriff's departments, police departments, fire departments, state rescue teams. They're working hard. But there's a lot of people that need help right now," he said.

He expressed concern for the state's many low-lying areas.

"The water kills and I'm just -- I'm scared to death of, you know, what's happened here and I hope everybody stays safe," he said.

	<p>Lee County Sheriff Carmine Marceno told "Good Morning America" on Sept. 29 they had thousands of 911 calls they were answering.</p> <p>"We still cannot access many of the people that are in need," Marceno said. "It's a real, real rough road ahead."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/11 Iran crackdown on protests intensifies
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/irans-crackdown-protests-intensifies-kurdish-region-91315264
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates -- Iran intensified its crackdown Tuesday on Kurdish areas in the country's west as protests sparked by the death of a 22-year-old woman detained by the morality police rage on, activists said.</p> <p>Riot police fired into at least one neighborhood in Sanandaj, the capital of Iran's Kurdistan province, as Amnesty International and the White House's national security adviser criticized the violence targeting demonstrators angered by the death of Mahsa Amini.</p> <p>Meanwhile, some oil workers Monday joined the protests at two key refinery complexes, for the first time linking an industry key to Iran's theocracy to the unrest.</p> <p>Iran's government insists Amini was not mistreated, but her family says her body showed bruises and other signs of beating. Subsequent videos have shown security forces beating and shoving female protesters, including women who have torn off their mandatory headscarf, or hijab.</p> <p>From the capital, Tehran, and elsewhere, videos have emerged online despite authorities disrupting the internet. Videos on Monday showed university and high school students demonstrating and chanting, with some women and girls marching through the streets without headscarves as the protests continue into a fourth week. The demonstrations represent one of the biggest challenges to Iran's theocracy since the 2009 Green Movement protests.</p> <p>One video posted online by a Kurdish group called the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights showed darkened streets with apparent gunfire going off and a bonfire burning in Sanandaj, some 400 kilometers (250 miles) west of Tehran.</p> <p>Another showed riot police carrying shotguns moving in formation with a vehicle, apparently firing at homes.</p> <p>The New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran posted another video showing what it described as a phalanx of motorcycle-riding security forces moving through Sanandaj.</p> <p>"They reportedly broke the windows of hundreds of cars in the Baharan neighborhood," the center said.</p> <p>Amini was Kurdish and her death has been felt particularly in Iran's Kurdish region, where demonstrations began Sept. 17 at her funeral there after her death the day before.</p> <p>Amnesty International criticized Iranian security forces for "using firearms and firing tear gas indiscriminately, including into people's homes." It urged the world to pressure Iran to end the crackdown as Tehran continues to disrupt internet and mobile phone networks "to hide their crimes."</p> <p>Iran did not immediately acknowledge the renewed crackdown in Sanandaj. However, Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned the British ambassador over the United Kingdom sanctioning members of the country's morality police and security officials due to the crackdown.</p>

	<p>Iran's Foreign Ministry called the sanctions “arbitrary and baseless,” even while threatening to potentially take countermeasures against London.</p> <p>Jake Sullivan, U.S. President Joe Biden's national security adviser, similarly noted that “the world is watching what is happening in Iran.”</p> <p>“These protestors are Iranian citizens, led by women and girls, demanding dignity and basic rights,” Sullivan wrote on Twitter. “We stand with them, and we will hold responsible those using violence in a vain effort to silence their voices.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 Election offices tighten midterm security
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/us/bullet-proof-glass-guards-us-election-offices-tighten-security-nov-8-midterms-2022-10-09/
GIST	<p>Oct 9 (Reuters) - When voters in Jefferson County, Colorado, cast their ballots in the Nov. 8 midterm election, they will see security guards stationed outside the busiest polling centers.</p> <p>At an election office in Flagstaff, Arizona, voters will encounter bulletproof glass and need to press a buzzer to enter. In Tallahassee, Florida, election workers will count ballots in a building that has been newly toughened with walls made of the super-strong fiber Kevlar.</p> <p>Spurred by a deluge of threats and intimidating behavior by conspiracy theorists and others upset over former President Donald Trump's 2020 election defeat, some election officials across the United States are fortifying their operations as they ramp up for another divisive election.</p> <p>A Reuters survey of 30 election offices found that 15 have enhanced security in various ways, from installing panic buttons to hiring extra security guards to holding active-shooter and de-escalation training.</p> <p>Reuters focused on offices in battleground states and offices that had openly expressed a need for security improvements, for example in congressional testimony. While the survey does not speak to how widespread such moves are, it does show how election officials are responding to threats in parts of the country where the election will likely be decided.</p> <p>Election officials around the country said they were coordinating more closely with local law enforcement to respond quickly to disturbances. Many have also trained workers in de-escalating conflicts and evading active shooters.</p> <p>Until recently, such threats to safety were seen as hypothetical in a country that has seen few instances of election-related violence since the civil rights battles of the 1960s, when the presence of armed officers sometimes intimidated rather than reassured Black voters.</p> <p>Now those risks are seen as real, said Tammy Patrick, a senior adviser at the Democracy Fund, a nonpartisan public-interest group founded by entrepreneur and Democratic donor Pierre Omidyar.</p> <p>"The likelihood that they could occur has definitely increased, so everyone is taking that to heart," she said.</p> <p>Election officials in 12 states, including some who have paid for moderate security improvements, said they have not received enough money to make their desired upgrades due to bureaucratic hurdles.</p> <p>In Champaign County, Illinois, clerk Aaron Ammons would like to install metal detectors at his office, where visitors have filmed staff and the layout of the space in what he described as a threatening manner.</p> <p>"It makes us feel like we're targets, or we're not a priority in the same way our men and women in uniform are. And we're on the front lines of democracy just like they are," said Ammons.</p>

Ammons gave testimony to Congress in August that he and his wife received anonymous messages threatening their daughter's life ahead of the 2020 election, and he told Reuters he recently saw someone filming his house.

The Justice Department says it has investigated more than 1,000 messages to election workers since the 2020 election, including more than 100 that could warrant prosecution. Reuters documented the campaign of fear being waged against election workers in a series of investigative reports.

Seven cases have been charged so far. The first sentence came Thursday, when a Nebraska man received 18 months in prison for threatening an election official.

SPOOKED WORKERS

One in five U.S. election officials said that they were unlikely to stay in their job through 2024, when Americans will go to the polls again to elect a president, according to a survey by the Brennan Center for Justice that was released in March. They cited stress, attacks by politicians and impending retirement as reasons.

The lingering bitterness from the 2020 election has also spooked many of the temporary workers who check in voters, count ballots and perform other tasks that make elections possible, officials say.

Philadelphia has boosted pay for election day workers from \$120 to \$250 to help recruiting efforts that have been complicated by fears of harassment, as well as a tight labor market, said Omar Sabir, one of the city's three election commissioners. After receiving death threats in 2020, he himself changed his travel patterns.

"You've got to keep your head on a swivel," Sabir said. "Sometimes I have nightmares thinking about that, somebody walking up and causing me harm."

PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Many election officials blame disinformation, such as Trump's baseless claims about election fraud in the 2020 election, for the surge in threats.

Justin Roebuck, the Republican clerk of Michigan's rural, conservative Ottawa County, said Trump's rhetoric had "really poisoned the well," inspiring other candidates to sow doubts about elections. In Michigan, Republican candidates for governor, attorney general and other positions have questioned the outcome of the 2020 election.

Roebuck's office held a three-hour role-playing exercise with local emergency management officials this year to plan how to respond to violent incidents. They also printed a brochure explaining balloting procedures that workers can hand to people to de-escalate confrontations with anyone aggressively questioning their work.

In addition to adding Kevlar walls, the Leon County, Florida, elections office has held active shooter trainings for its workers, installed bullet- and bomb-resistant glass, and invested in security cameras and video file storage, according to elections supervisor Mark Earley, who says he gets frequent hostile and profane calls from strangers.

"I've got to worry about my workers leaving the building and walking up to their cars after dark," he said.

Earley paid to stiffen his facility's security with a 2020 grant from the Center for Tech and Civic Life, a non-profit group funded by Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg. But Florida and 25 other states have since banned such outside funding.

FUNDING WOES

Election officials say they have struggled to get federal aid for safety measures.

	<p>The departments of Justice and Homeland Security said this year that funds would be available for election office security, but that money was claimed by local police departments and others more familiar with those programs, said Amy Cohen, the head of the National Association of State Election Directors.</p> <p>A spokesman for the Justice Department said the agency's Election Threats Task Force had worked since its launch in 2021 to steer federal aid to local election offices for security enhancements, and had urged Congress to provide more such funding.</p> <p>Some offices have paid for security enhancements by cutting back elsewhere. Jefferson County, Colorado, has scaled back mailings to voters to pay for four security guards who will monitor the busiest four voting locations in the weeks surrounding the election.</p> <p>"It's worth it for us, having the ability to be proactive rather than reactive," said George Stern, the Jefferson County clerk.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Belarus: joint military group with Russia
SOURCE	https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/10/10/belarus-says-forming-joint-military-group-with-russia-a79041
GIST	<p>Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said Minsk and Moscow have agreed to deploy a joint regional group of military forces in response to alleged “aggravations” on Belarus’ western border, Belarusian state media reported Monday.</p> <p>"Given the worsening of the situation on the western borders of the Union State, we agreed to deploy a regional group of forces of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus,” the long-serving Belarusian leader said during a meeting with security officials, according to the state Belta news agency.</p> <p>Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed Lukashenko’s comments, saying the agreement underscores the strong partnership between the two countries.</p> <p>“The interaction of various fields, including defense, are constantly being discussed during bilateral talks between President Putin and Lukashenko,” Peskov said.</p> <p>According to Lukashenko, the two countries started pulling forces together two days ago following Saturday’s attack on the Moscow-built Crimean Bridge which connects the annexed Ukrainian peninsula to mainland Russia.</p> <p>“I must inform you that the formation of this group has begun. It's been going on for, I think, two days. I gave an order to start forming this group," Lukashenko said.</p> <p>He accused Kyiv of readying an attack on Minsk.</p> <p>"I've said already that today Ukraine is not just discussing but planning strikes on the territory of Belarus," Lukashenko said.</p> <p>The joint grouping of forces — which, if amassed along Belarus’ western borders, would be deployed near EU members and Ukraine allies Poland, Lithuania and Latvia — would constitute just a small number of Russian forces, Lukashenko said.</p> <p>"The last thing they [Russia] need is another conflict. You know they have enough problems. Therefore, we should not expect a large number from the Russian Armed Forces. But it will be more than 1,000 people," Lukashenko said, according to Belta.</p> <p>Lukashenko accused its pro-Western neighbors of training "militants" to carry out a military mutiny inside Belarus.</p>

	<p>"The training in Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine of Belarusian radical militants for them to carry out sabotage, terrorist attacks and to organize a military mutiny in the country is becoming a direct threat," Lukashenko said, accusing Washington and Brussels of seeking to "aggravate the situation."</p> <p>A longtime ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Lukashenko has faced accusations of facilitating Moscow's invasion of Ukraine by allowing Russian forces to group and launch attacks on northern Ukraine from Belarus' territory — although he claimed to have stopped short of sending Belarusian forces to fight.</p> <p>Lukashenko claimed the joint forces will be instructed to "keep things calm" on Belarus' borders with the EU rather than pursue an escalation.</p> <p>"Please get ready to host these people soon and accommodate them where necessary, according to our plan. Without going over the top, keeping things calm," Lukashenko told his defense minister.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Putin warns of more reprisal attacks
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/10/europe/ukraine-kyiv-missile-strikes-russia-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Multiple explosions rocked Kyiv and several other Ukrainian cities reported blasts and power outages on Monday morning, as Russia lashed out with a massive wave of violent airstrikes that carried echoes of the initial days of its invasion.</p> <p>Moscow had fired 75 rockets towards Ukraine by midday on Monday, the Commander-in-Chief of the country's military said, 41 of which were neutralized by Ukrainian missile defense systems.</p> <p>The assault appears to be the heaviest bombardment of missile and rocket attacks seen in most of Ukraine since February, targeting power plants, bridges, civilian infrastructure and other locations.</p> <p>It comes two days after an eruption damaged a crucial bridge to Crimea and dealt a strategic blow to the Kremlin. A wounded Vladimir Putin, who has also seen weeks of Russian losses on the battlefield, had been under pressure to respond with force following the explosion, which Putin on Sunday blamed on Kyiv and described as an act of terror.</p> <p>"It is simply impossible to leave such crimes unanswered," Putin said in a brief television appearance on Monday. "If attempts to carry out terrorist attacks on our territory continue, responses from Russia will be tough and will correspond in scale to the level of threats to the Russian Federation."</p> <p>At least four explosions were heard in Ukraine's capital during rush hour on Monday morning. A children's playground was among the sites hit by a rocket or missile, according to Anton Gerashchenko, an adviser to the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, who tweeted images of a smoldering crater in the ground next to the site. Gerashchenko said five people had been killed and 12 injured in the city.</p> <p>In the western city of Lviv, mayor Andriy Sadovyi said an explosion hit "a critical infrastructure facility."</p> <p>"Part of the city is without electricity. A third of the traffic lights do not work," Sadovyi said on Telegram, warning civilians to stay inside.</p> <p>Authorities in Sumy, in the northeast of Ukraine, said there were power outages across the region after missile attacks, reporting that "two missiles hit an infrastructure facility" in Konotop. Officials in Kharkiv also reported attacks.</p> <p>For several hours on Monday morning Kyiv's subway system was suspended, with underground stations serving as bunkers. But the air raid alert in the city was lifted at midday, as rescue workers sought to pull people from the rubble caused by the strikes.</p>

Demys Shmygal, Ukraine's Prime Minister, said Monday that as of 11 a.m. local time, a total of 11 "crucial infrastructure facilities" in eight regions had been damaged.

The blasts will be accompanied by concerns that Putin may seek to [escalate the conflict in Ukraine](#), after Moscow's stuttering ground campaign and the damage to the Crimean bridge dealt a major blow to the Russian President.

Putin held an operational meeting of his Security Council on Monday, a day after he called the explosions on the Crimea bridge a "terrorist attack" and said the organizers and executors were "Ukrainian special services."

Kyiv has not claimed responsibility for the blast on the enormous 19-kilometer (about 12-mile) bridge, which was built after Moscow annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014, an annexation regarded by the West as illegal. The crossing was opened by Putin himself in 2018, and Ukrainian reaction to the explosion has been gleeful and triumphant.

The Russian-appointed head of annexed Crimea, Sergey Aksyonov, said he had "good news" Monday, claiming that Russia's approaches to what it calls its special military operation in Ukraine "have changed."

"I have been saying from the first day of the special military operation that if such actions to destroy the enemy's infrastructure had been taken every day, we would have finished everything in May and the Kyiv regime would have been defeated," he added.

Monday's explosions reverberated across central and western Ukraine, far away from the battlefields in the northeast, east and south where a powerful Ukrainian counter-offensive has liberated towns and pushed Russian troops back in recent weeks.

"They are trying to annihilate us and wipe us off the face of the earth," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Telegram on Monday as the scale of the attacks became clear. "That's it, in a nutshell. They are trying to slaughter our people who are sleeping in their homes in Zaporizhzhia. They are trying to kill people who are on their way to work in Dnipro and Kyiv."

"All over Ukraine, the air raid sirens will not abate. Rockets continue to strike. Unfortunately, there are dead and wounded. I ask you: do not leave your shelters. Stay safe and take care of your families. Let's hang in there and be strong," Zelensky added.

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HEADLINE	10/08 US is world's largest oil producer
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/08/us-is-worlds-largest-oil-producer-why-youre-going-pay-more-gas-anyway/
GIST	<p>When the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its partners — often known as OPEC Plus — announced a production cut of 2 million barrels of oil on Wednesday, the reaction in the United States was less than positive. In a statement, the White House called the decision "shortsighted" and vowed to look at alternatives for U.S. oil supply.</p> <p>But the oil cut raised a question. Over the past few decades, various presidents have stressed the importance of U.S. "energy independence." (Former president Donald Trump famously claimed that under his term, the U.S. achieved energy independence, only to lose it under President Biden.) Since 2018, however, the United States has been the largest producer of oil and gas in the world and a net exporter — the country exports more than it imports. Why, then, do U.S. oil prices hinge on the actions of an international oil cartel?</p> <p>The answer — like the global oil market — is complex.</p>

The most straightforward answer, according to Ann-Louise Hittle, vice president of oils research at the research and consultancy company Wood Mackenzie, is that U.S. demand still outstrips its own supply. “We’re the world’s largest producer, but we’re also the world’s largest consumer,” she said. The U.S. produces [18.8 million barrels of oil per day](#) but consumes slightly more — 20.5 million barrels per day. (The world as a whole consumes about 100 million barrels per day.) That difference means that no matter what, the U.S. has to purchase oil on the global market. So when supply in the market contracts slightly — as it will with the decision from OPEC Plus — that can affect prices in the U.S.

And even if U.S. production exactly matched U.S. demand, the country would still be importing and exporting oil constantly. Crude oil can be heavy or light, sweet or sour, and those qualities affect how much it needs to be refined and for what uses. U.S. oil companies constantly export crude oil and import refined oil, and vice versa.

But there is another, more complicated explanation as well. “When it comes to insulating our economy from global oil price shocks, being a big producer means next to nothing,” said Bob McNally, the founder and president of the Rapidan Energy Group and the author of “Crude Volatility: The History and Future of Boom-Bust Oil Prices.”

“Real power in the oil market comes from being able to stabilize prices,” he said.

McNally argues that what matters most for stabilizing global oil prices is “[spare production capacity](#)” — defined as how much a producer can ramp up oil production within 30 days. That spare production capacity allows a producer to ramp up — or slow down — oil production basically at will, shifting global prices.

Saudi Arabia has a huge amount of spare production capacity: around [2 million barrels of oil](#) a day. Once, the United States *did* have spare production capacity that was managed by the [Texas Railroad Commission](#). But as more easily reached oil dried up — to be replaced by harder-to-reach shale oil — that power disappeared. Today, the United States’ spare production capacity is zero. U.S. oil producers, many of whom are beholden to their shareholders, can’t hold on to spare capacity in the same way as their Middle East counterparts.

Spare production capacity “is expensive to maintain, which is why no other producers maintain it,” said Hittle. In the U.S., she added, investors would never put up with spending capital to develop production and then letting it sit idle until the right moment.

Is there any solution to the United States’ role in the global market? Some researchers [have suggested](#) that the government could promise to buy more oil for the [Strategic Petroleum Reserve](#), or SPR, a stockpile of hundreds of millions of barrels of oil that is supposed to help insulate U.S. consumers from oil price shocks. (Earlier this year, Biden ordered the release of [1 million barrels](#) of oil a day in an attempt to lower oil prices.)

But experts say that the SPR is becoming worryingly depleted — and that it’s simply not a strong enough tool to counter the actions of OPEC. “It’s like bringing a squirt gun to a firefight with guys with guns,” McNally said. If the SPR becomes too drained, he argues, oil prices will rise even faster — and there will be no remaining buffer to protect U.S. consumers.

Biden has also urged oil producers in the United States to drill more to help lower prices — but the president simply doesn’t have authority to order companies to produce more. And oil companies, recently burned from price crashes in the beginning of 2020, are hesitant to repeat the same mistakes.

In the short term, McNally says, the best thing that the country can do is not make the situation worse. “There’s no magic wand for short-term price volatility,” he said. “It’s going to be a wild ride until we have a scalable, affordable and reliable alternative to oil for transportation.”

HEADLINE	10/10 Many Australia military projects delayed
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/australiasays-many-military-projects-are-delayed-over-budget-11665390564?mod=hp_listb_pos2
GIST	<p>SYDNEY—Key U.S. ally Australia said at least two dozen military projects are delayed or over budget and that it would seek to improve procurement, as it prepares for increasing strategic competition with China.</p> <p>Australian officials said 28 projects are delayed—some by three or four years—and 18 are over budget, with cost overruns in the billions of dollars. They include frigates and patrol boats, a battlefield command system and several satellite communications projects.</p> <p>“Given the strategic threat that the country faces, we will have a rising defense budget going forward,” Defense Minister Richard Marles said. “It’s why it’s really important that every dollar of defense spending is managed in an excellent way.”</p> <p>With the global economy fragile after the Covid-19 pandemic, many countries, particularly U.S. allies, are seeking to respond to rising geopolitical tensions without abandoning financial prudence. And although delays and cost blowouts projects aren’t unusual for military projects, they are more concerning now, defense experts said, given China’s efforts to expand its influence in the Indo-Pacific.</p> <p>Delays can create capability gaps that foes can exploit in a conflict, which military planners believe could be sooner than previously expected. A 2020 strategic update from Australia’s defense department concluded that the previous assumption that the country had 10 years to prepare was no longer accurate. Those fears were highlighted about two months ago when live-fire Chinese exercises around Taiwan simulated a blockade.</p> <p>Mr. Marles acknowledged the potential for capability gaps, and said Australia would spend money to extend the life of some existing weapons platforms, like its current fleet of diesel-powered submarines, and probably its frigates.</p> <p>“You can’t go into a war with capabilities you’re going to buy in 10 years,” said Chris Barrie, a retired admiral and former chief of the Australian military who is now an honorary professor at Australian National University. “War is a here-and-now thing.”</p> <p>Several factors have caused the issues, defense experts said. The defense department bureaucracy isn’t known for quick decisions, and Australia-specific modifications to some systems have led to delays, some said. Australian officials may also have been overly optimistic about what the country could achieve, given its small population compared with those of powers like the U.S. A post-Covid labor shortage could also be playing a role.</p> <p>“It’s almost as though we didn’t pay enough attention to the demands of labor and skills required to deliver all of this,” Adm. Barrie said. “I think having a careful look, going through the books, and figuring out where we’re situated is important.”</p> <p>Mr. Marles said the government will establish an independent office within the defense department to oversee military projects, require monthly reports on key projects to government ministers and set up an early-warning system to make sure troubled projects get attention.</p> <p>Officials, however, said it would be difficult to make up for time lost on projects already under way.</p> <p>“We are absolutely committed to trying to get all of these projects back on track as soon as possible,” said Mr. Marles, who took up his post after an election in May brought a center-left government to power. “But I don’t want to understate the significance of that task.”</p> <p>Australia is a key part of the U.S. strategy to build a network of alliances to serve as a counterweight to China in the Indo-Pacific region. Last year, Australia, the U.S. and the U.K. signed a security pact called</p>

	<p>Aukus that will help Australia acquire nuclear-powered submarines. The U.S. bases troops in Darwin, a strategic location in northern Australia, for part of the year.</p> <p>The Australian government is already looking at revamping its armed forces. In August, officials launched a review of the military that they said would be the most significant in decades.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Russia unleashes barrage on Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/explosions-rock-kyiv-in-first-attack-on-ukraines-capital-in-months-11665384662?mod=hp_lead_pos1
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine—Russia carried out waves of strikes on several Ukrainian cities including the capital in the broadest and most intense onslaught since the start of the invasion, after President Vladimir Putin accused Ukraine of a “terrorist attack” on a critical bridge connecting Russia to the occupied Crimean Peninsula.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia had carried out dozens of strikes using missiles as well as Iranian-made drones to target civilian and power infrastructure. “They want panic and chaos,” he said. “They want to destroy our energy system.”</p> <p>Blasts were also heard in Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Sumy and in the western cities of Ivano-Frankovsk and Lviv, which had remained relatively insulated from the war raging in the east.</p> <p>Valeriy Zaluzhny, the commander in chief of Ukraine’s armed forces, said Russia had so far fired 75 missiles at Ukrainian cities, of which 41 were shot down. The attacks are continuing, he said, urging people to remain in bomb shelters.</p> <p>One of the first blasts in Kyiv struck around rush hour Monday morning as people were on their way to work and school. At the scene of an explosion at an intersection near Kyiv’s Shevchenko Park, a body lay in the street near the mangled remains of several vehicles. It was the most central strike in the capital since Russia invaded in February.</p> <p>At least eight people were killed in the attack on Kyiv’s Shevchenkivskiy district, according to Rostyslav Smirnov, an adviser to the minister of internal affairs. The district is a cultural center, with museums and university buildings around a park where people often stroll or gather to play chess. A girl who had been filming herself walking nearby captured the moment of impact, which knocked her to the ground. Falling debris and shattering glass were audible in the video posted on social media.</p> <p>Another strike in Kyiv hit an office block near an electrical-power station. Further blasts were heard but it wasn’t immediately clear what had been hit. A column of smoke rose over an electrical-power plant on the eastern side of the capital.</p> <p>One missile landed near the local headquarters of Samsung Electronics Co. The company wasn’t immediately available for comment.</p> <p>Authorities in Kyiv suspended trains on all subway lines, as underground stations operate as shelters.</p> <p>Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said rockets had struck targets in the city center, appealing to residents of outlying districts to stay away. Emergency services were at the scene and security forces have closed off streets in the center, Mr. Klitschko said. “The capital is under attack from Russian terrorists!” he wrote.</p> <p>Air-defense systems have helped keep Kyiv relatively secure in recent months, even as missiles landed in other cities. Many residents who had fled in the early days of the invasion had returned to the city after Russian forces pulled back in March.</p>

Russian rockets pounded the southeastern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia for the third time in less than a week early Monday, just a day after [separate strikes in the city killed at least 14 people](#) and injured more than 70.

Oleksandr Starukh, governor of the Zaporizhzhia region, wrote on Telegram that the latest strikes in the center of the city destroyed a multistory residential building, killing one and wounding five. There could be people under the rubble, he said.

Vladimir Rogov, the Kremlin-installed leader of the partially occupied region of Zaporizhzhia, said the strikes in the city early Monday had targeted “military and civilian infrastructure” used by Ukrainian forces.

Zaporizhzhia, which is about 30 miles from the front lines, has become a constant target of Russian shelling in recent days. Kyiv controls the city but Russian forces hold most of the region’s territory.

Igor Terekhov, mayor of Kharkiv in northeastern Ukraine, said strikes had knocked out electricity and water supplies in parts of the city. Traffic on the Kharkiv metro was also suspended. Andriy Sadovyi, mayor of Lviv in western Ukraine, said part of the city was without electricity, with power generators operating to restore water supplies.

Russia’s Kerch Strait Bridge, which links the mainland to Crimea and has been the economic and military lifeblood of the occupying force on the peninsula, was hit by an explosion on Saturday. The explosion struck a symbolic, physical and logistical blow to Russia, exposing a weakness in its readiness to protect important infrastructure and threatening to stifle commercial traffic to Crimea, some Russian analysts said.

Mr. Putin has been under increasing pressure at home after the bridge attack as Russian lawmakers and politicians have been calling for retribution.

In his first public comments on the Crimea bridge blast, Mr. Putin blamed Ukraine, calling it a “terrorist attack” aimed at civilian infrastructure.

“Its plotters, perpetrators, and masterminds are the Ukrainian security services,” Mr. Putin said Sunday in a televised recording of a meeting with his top federal investigative official.

Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said the Ukrainian state was directly responsible for the attack and that Russia’s response “can only be the direct destruction of terrorists.”

Kyiv didn’t claim responsibility for the attack, though senior Ukrainian officials widely celebrated it on social media.

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HEADLINE	10/10 Day 229 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/10/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-229-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kyiv was targeted by at least four missiles on Monday morning, the first strikes on the Ukrainian capital in several months, as other Ukrainian cities also came under Russian attack in the wake of Saturday’s huge explosion that hit a key Russian-built bridge in the Crimea. Among the targets hit overnight were the city of Zaporizhzhia which was hit for the third night in a row and the port city of Mykolaiv.• Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelenskiy, in response to this morning’s series of attacks on Ukrainian cities, posted to Telegram: “They are trying to destroy us and wipe us off the face of the earth.”• The strikes came after Vladimir Putin called the blast on the Crimea-Russia bridge an “act of terror” and blamed Ukraine directly for the attack. The Russian president accused “Ukrainian secret services” of carrying out the explosion at the Kerch Bridge, a vital link between Russian-

	<p>occupied Crimea and the Russian mainland. “There is no doubt. This is an act of terrorism aimed at destroying critically important civilian infrastructure,” Putin said in a video released on Sunday night. “This was devised, carried out and ordered by the Ukrainian special services.” Ukraine has not directly claimed responsibility for the attack, which Russia said was carried out by a truck bomb.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russian divers are to examine the extent of the damage caused by the blast on the road-and-rail bridge. Crimea’s Russian governor, Sergei Aksyonov, told reporters that residents would manage despite the damage to the bridge. “Of course, emotions have been triggered and there is a healthy desire to seek revenge,” he said. • Putin will convene his national security council on Monday to discuss the Kerch Bridge blast, according to the Kremlin’s spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov. The meeting comes amid growing expectation that the Kremlin plans an imminent and harsh escalation of its war. • At least 14 people have been confirmed dead after Russian shelling in Zaporizhzhia in Ukraine’s south-east early on Sunday. Images showed a nine-storey building burning and partially collapsed as rescue workers sought to retrieve the dead and wounded. Regional governor, Oleksandr Starukh, warned there may be more people under the rubble as president Volodymyr Zelenskiy said debris is still being cleared. “More than 70 people were injured, including 11 children,” he added in his latest Sunday evening address. • A power line that was cut by shelling of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant has been restored, according to the chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). • Authorities have exhumed the first 20 bodies from makeshift graves in the recently liberated city of Lyman in the eastern Donetsk region, Ukraine’s national police said on Sunday. • Air force general Sergei Surovikin has been <u>named as the overall commander</u> of Russian forces fighting in Ukraine, Russia’s defence ministry announced. The change is Moscow’s third senior military appointment in a week and follows the reported sacking earlier this week of the commanders of two of Russia’s five military regions, as its forces have suffered a series of dramatic reverses in northeastern and southern Ukraine in recent weeks. • German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and US president Joe Biden said the Kremlin’s latest nuclear threats were “irresponsible” and its partial mobilisation “a serious mistake” during a phone call on Sunday. The call was focused on preparations for the upcoming G7 and G20 meetings that will address Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the consequences, a German government statement read. • The US military’s top spokesperson <u>tamped down concerns of an imminent nuclear threat</u> from Russia, days after Joe Biden warned of a potential <u>nuclear “Armageddon”</u>. “We have not faced the prospect of Armageddon since Kennedy and the Cuban missile crisis,” the president said at a Democratic fundraiser last week. Top Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said Biden’s comments “were not based on new or fresh intelligence or new indications that Mr Putin has made a decision to use nuclear weapons,” in an interview on ABC News’ This Week.
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HEADLINE	10/09 Ukraine front lines moving east
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/09/world/europe/russia-ukraine-forces-borova.html
GIST	<p>BOROVA, Ukraine — The battle zone east of the city of Kharkiv, Ukraine, is a mileslong territory of muddy roads, blasted intersections and destroyed bridges. The only traffic is military vehicles, as soldiers bring in supplies and move equipment.</p> <p>Wrecked Russian tanks and armor dot the roads and villages, burned out in battles or crashed and abandoned as Russian troops retreated. Ukrainian units have painted their names on the vehicles to claim them as trophies.</p> <p>As Ukrainian troops press their counterattack against occupying Russian forces, fighting is continuing apace in the northeast. The front line is shifting fast, revealing casualties and destruction from recent battles and, as Ukrainian soldiers capture territory, evidence of killings and torture in a forest camp outside the village of Borova.</p>

“Every day we are taking another village,” said Serhii Filimonov, commander of a Ukrainian assault unit that helped recapture the strategic city of Kupiansk and a string of towns and villages down the eastern bank of the Oskil River in the past few days.

Part of the Ukrainian counteroffensive, which has made sweeping gains across the northeastern provinces in recent weeks, Mr. Filimonov’s unit took a few days to recharge before joining another assault farther east on Friday. The fighting was heavy, with the steady, deep rumbling of artillery bombardment audible from the villages around Kupiansk and black smoke drifting on the eastern horizon.

After a trip to collect supplies, Mr. Filimonov, 28, accompanied a New York Times reporter through some of the recently recaptured territory.

Some of the heaviest recent fighting occurred in late September in Kupiansk, which straddles the Oskil River, and at a strategic railway junction farther south on the eastern river bank. The Russians made a crucial mistake, Mr. Filimonov said, when they failed to destroy the main bridge in Kupiansk. A narrow sidewalk of the bridge remained standing, allowing Ukrainian assault teams to cross on foot on Sept. 16 and gain a toehold on the eastern bank.

Those teams closed in on Russian troops from the east as the main Ukrainian force fought its way into the city from the west. Russian troops battled on in the city for five more days, and reinforcements tried to break through for part of that time, but the Ukrainian presence across the river made their positions untenable.

Evidence of the battles still litters Kupiansk. The bodies of two Russian soldiers lay on either side of a workman’s truck on a main junction on the east bank.

The last group of Russian soldiers had broken out from Kupiansk, crossing the river south of the city along the railway line, but Ukrainian troops ambushed them down the road, knocking out their armored vehicles and a military truck full of men, Mr. Filimonov said.

“They had 25 of them running, scattering to the bushes and basements,” he said. A burned-out truck marked the spot beside smashed trees and blackened debris. “This was all covered with bodies,” he said.

His unit captured one of the Russians. “He told us that he came here because he owed a large debt in unpaid alimony payments and he was about to go to prison,” Mr. Filimonov said. The soldier had been given the option to enlist to fight Ukraine instead; he had spent only 10 days in Kupiansk before it fell to Ukrainian troops.

“His commanders pulled out, and he was left behind,” Mr. Filimonov said. “They have lots of these poor infantry guys, who come here because of debts, but they are treated like meat, just thrown into the fight.”

The Russians had wanted to use the river as a line of defense against the Ukrainian advance, but the Ukrainian breach at Kupiansk was decisive, Mr. Filimonov said. Farther south, troops from Ukraine’s 80th Air Assault Brigade also succeeded in crossing the Oskil River, and in a coordinated pincer movement, the two Ukrainian groups seized 60 miles of territory along the eastern bank in less than a week.

“War is not about infantry and who shoots more,” Mr. Filimonov said. “War is maneuvering and surprise.”

Many of the towns and the villages along the way showed little damage after Russian troops fell back rapidly. Women who gathered to collect humanitarian aid in the town of Kivsharivka said that they had heard the battle drawing closer but that it had swept past them.

But other places showed evidence of fierce fighting. Houses were damaged from shell fire, and many of the larger buildings that had been used as bases by Russian troops were destroyed by powerful explosions.

Before the counterattack, the Ukrainians had benefited from accurate artillery fire, particularly by units with American-supplied mobile rocket launchers known as M142 HIMARS, Mr. Filimonov said. Internet communications provided by Starlink satellites had been critical in allowing the Ukrainian side to coordinate its offensive across the length of several fronts, he added.

The Russians used mortars and called in airstrikes to cover their retreat, he said. At a strategic river crossing, an entire hamlet was smashed to pieces by Russian artillery, he said, its houses and trees bombarded and its bridge blown up.

“We don’t allow our men to fire on homes,” Mr. Filimonov said, “because our soldiers are from here and their families are here.”

At one spot, a Russian soldier lay dead on a stretcher on a grass verge. Another Russian had fallen down a slope. He had been providing machine gun cover as others tried to evacuate the wounded, but they had been overrun, Mr. Filimonov said.

On a road heading east from the village of Kurylivka, a column of civilian cars, shredded by shrapnel and explosions, stood abandoned beside a railway line. Trying to escape the fighting, a group of 30 to 40 civilians had set off together on Sept. 25 in a convoy heading toward the Russian-controlled city of Svatove.

But Russian troops who were falling back had set up defensive positions on a ridge along the railway line. Survivors from the convoy said it came under withering fire from grenade launchers and machine guns. Twenty-four civilians died in the attack, among them women and children. Mr. Filimonov came across the wreckage several days later.

Farther south was evidence that a Russian unit had been ambushed: The bodies of a dozen soldiers lay in the mud beside an armored vehicle, their limbs contorted or broken by a blast, a helmet thrown aside.

Judging from the weapons the group had carried, and what Mr. Filimonov said were French-made optics on its vehicle, it had been a special operations unit.

Yet even as the Ukrainians pursued the Russians through town after town, the Russians sometimes evaded their pursuers. When Ukrainian troops seized Borova on Tuesday they found that the Russians had already evacuated a camp in the forest outside the village.

In the camp, rows of wooden cabins where Russian soldiers had been staying were abandoned in haste, with doors swung wide and plates of food untouched on picnic tables.

Behind the buildings were pits where soldiers found bodies, some of them dismembered and showing signs of torture, Mr. Filimonov said.

One of the victims was Serhii Avdeev, 33, who was detained at his home on Sept. 10. His family found his body a week later, after the Russians had left.

“We hoped to find him alive,” his mother, Svetlana Avdeeva, said outside her home in Borova as she wept. “We do not even know what day he died.”

His father, Oleksandr Avdeev, said he had washed his son’s body to prepare him for burial and found terrible wounds. “He had 15 bullet wounds in the back,” he said. “The artery in his back was severed. He had knife wounds to the chest. His finger was cut off, and his genitals were cut off.”

“They are not humans to behave like that,” his wife continued. “I wish the same death upon him who did that to my child.”

	On Thursday, police officers were investigating the site. Two body bags lay beside one deep pit where a rusty chain still hung. A woman and man, handcuffed together, had been found dead there, Mr. Filimonov said.
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HEADLINE	10/09 World Covid cases drop as Europe rises
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/10/09/COVID-19-world-weekly-cases-drop-7-but-European-nations-rise-2/7481665327825/
GIST	<p>Oct. 9 (UPI) -- Coronavirus cases are surging in some European nations, including Germany, Austria, Italy and France at least 24% each in the past week, though world infections are down 7% and deaths 10% to among lowest since the start of the pandemic in March 2020.</p> <p>Also, Mainland China, where the virus originated, has had a rise in cases, one week before the Communist Party congress in Beijing. Xinjiang, which is 7,500 miles west of the capital, is in a near lockdown, including people unable to depart the region.</p> <p>Europe was the only continent to post a rise in cases over seven days, 2%, though deaths dropped 0.3%.</p> <p>Cases' moving average was at 421,444, which is the least since 397,470 July 5, 2021. In one week they declined to 2,950,804 with the total 6,560,987.</p> <p>The seven-day moving average for deaths was down to 1,221, the fewest since 1,075 March 21, 2020, 10 days after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, according to Worldometers.info. In one week deaths declined to 8,551 drop, with the cumulative 6,560,987 Sunday.</p> <p>Daily deaths worldwide dropped to 426 Sunday, the fewest since 424 March 14, after 752 Saturday and 961 last Sunday. It was 972 on June 19, the previous time under 1,000.</p> <p>Cases were 229,027 Sunday, the lowest number since 222,766 Aug. 16, 2020, after 296,743 Saturday. The last time cases were above 1 million was July 31.</p> <p>Some nations do not report data on weekends. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention doesn't report data on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays with plans to go to weekly updates on Oct. 20.</p> <p>The records were 3,846,048 cases on Jan. 21, during the height of the Omicron subvariant, and 16,849 deaths on Jan. 21, 2021, when the Delta subvariant was at its peak.</p> <p>Few big countries reported increases in both categories in the past week, mainly in Europe.</p> <p>Germany posted the most weekly cases, 562,403, which is a 30% rise, one week after a 60% gain, and the fifth-most deaths at 471, but a 22% decline.</p> <p>France had the second-most cases, 385,820, which rose 24%. In deaths, the United States was No. 1 at 2,023, which decreased 22%, and around 1,300 more than second-place Russia at 725, a 2% rise.</p> <p>In the past week, Asia reported 28.9% of the world's cases and it dropped 13% for a cumulative 190,926,668, according to Worldometers.info. The continent has 59% percent of the world's population.</p> <p>Europe's cases rose to a cumulative world-high 229,590,892. Decreasing were North America 28% for 116,836,556, Africa 26% for 12,654,175, Oceania 24% for 12,451,454, South America 15% for 64,199,269.</p> <p>South America is the sole one to gain in deaths, 14% for 1,330,848. Dropping were Oceania 49% for 12,172, North America 21% for 1,543,649, Asia 15% for 1,482,302, Africa 5% for 257,672, Europe with a world-high 1,925,329.</p>

The United States leads with 1,087,880 fatalities and 98,555,072 infections. The nation also holds the world record for daily cases at 906,886 on Jan. 7. Brazil is second in deaths at 686,919, including 15 Sunday and fourth in cases at 34,764,661, including 1,801 Sunday.

India is second in cases at 44,612,013, including 2,756 Sunday and third in deaths at 528,799, including 21 Sunday, with single deaths reported in April and zero the last time on March 24, 2020.

India has the daily deaths record at 4,529 on May 18, 2021, with no adjustments from regions.

Case increases in the past week with more than 25,000 in descending order were Taiwan 10% at No. 3 322,572, Italy 30% at No. 4 280,947, Austria 24% at No. 9 96,654, Singapore 69% at No. 12 36,985,

Also in the top 10 for most cases but dropping: United States 28% at No. 6 227,883, Japan 32% at 215,243, Russia 39% at No. 7 165,571, South Korea 22% at No. 8 157,121, Britain 11% at No. 10 44,585.

Among nations reporting more than 100 deaths with increases in the past week: Brazil 27% at No. 3 591, Taiwan 19% at No. 7 364, Italy 32% at No. 8 364, France 29% at No. 9 293, Spain 56% at No. 10 268, Philippines 12% at No. 11 249, Poland 11% at No. 13 158, Peru 42% at No. 15 149, Czechia 18% at No. 19 104.

Also in the top 10 for most deaths but decreasing: Japan 19% at No. 4 510 and Britain 9% at No. 6 409.

In the top 10 for deaths, Mexico is fifth with 330,202 and no weekend data, Peru sixth with 216,727 and 27 Saturday, Britain seventh with 190,888 with no data on weekends, Italy eighth with 177,519 including 41 Sunday, Indonesia ninth with 158,205 including seven Sunday and France 10th with 155,422 with no change on the weekend.

In the top 10 for cases, France is third with 35,866,253 including 42,626 Sunday, Germany is fifth with 33,948,632, Britain seventh with 23,735,273, Italy eighth with 22,815,736 including 34,443 Sunday, Japan ninth with 21,567,543 including 22,796 Sunday, Russia 10th with 21,203,332 including 30,085 Sunday.

European nations are experiencing case surges upon the arrival of cooler weather.

Despite a dramatic fall in testing, WHO data released Wednesday showed that cases in the European Union reached 1.5 million last week, up 8% from the previous week.

Hospitalizations also have spiked, including nearly 32% week in Italy with intensive care admissions up 21%, according to data compiled by independent scientific foundation Gimbe.

In Britain, which is not part of the European Union, they rose 45% in one week.

"There must be some complacency in that life seems to have gone back to normal - at least with regards Covid and people now have other financial and war-related worries," said Adam Finn, chairman of an expert group advising the WHO on vaccine preventable diseases in Europe, told CNN.

And Penny Ward, visiting professor in pharmaceutical medicine at King's College London, also told CNN: "Quite a high proportion of the population might have also had a Covid episode in recent months."

British officials last week warned that renewed circulation of flu and a resurgence in Covid-19 further strain the National Health Service.

Experts warn this situation could hit the United States.

"In the past, what's happened in Europe often has been a harbinger for what's about to happen in the United States," says Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy

at the University of Minnesota, told NPR. "So I think the bottom line message for us in this country is: We have to be prepared for what they are beginning to see in Europe."

But the situation may be different in Europe than the United States because of different levels of immunity and susceptibility to new subvariants they've not yet been exposed to.

"If it is mostly just behavioral changes and climate, we might be able to avoid similar upticks if there is broad uptake of the bivalent vaccine," Justin Lessler, an epidemiologist at the University of North Carolina who helps run the COVID-19 Scenario Modeling Hub, told NPR. "If it is immune escape across several variants with convergent evolution, the outlook for the U.S. may be more concerning."

Without new restrictions in place, including social distancing and masks, people should stay at home if unwell, Dr. Susan Hopkins, chief medical adviser at the UK Health Security Agency, said in a report by The Guardian.

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HEADLINE	10/09 NKorea: missile tests for striking South
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nkoreas-kim-jong-un-oversaw-tactical-nuclear-military-training-2022-10-09/
GIST	<p>SEOUL, Oct 10 (Reuters) - North Korea's recent flurry of missile tests were designed to simulate showering the South with tactical nuclear weapons as a warning after large-scale navy drills by South Korean and U.S. forces, state news agency KCNA said on Monday.</p> <p>North Korea fired two ballistic missiles early on Sunday, officials in Seoul and Tokyo said, the seventh such launch since Sept. 25.</p> <p>Leader Kim Jong Un guided exercises by nuclear tactical units over the past two weeks, involving ballistic missiles with mock nuclear warheads, KCNA reported, saying they were meant to deliver a strong message of war deterrence.</p> <p>The tests simulated striking military command facilities, main ports, and airports in the South, KCNA added.</p> <p>"The effectiveness and practical combat capability of our nuclear combat force were fully demonstrated as it stands completely ready to hit and destroy targets at any time from any location," KCNA said.</p> <p>"Even though the enemy continues to talk about dialogue and negotiations, we do not have anything to talk about nor do we feel the need to do so," KCNA quoted Kim as saying.</p> <p>KCNA said North Korea's ruling Workers' Party decided to conduct the drills as an unavoidable response to a large-scale mobilisation of U.S. and South Korean naval forces, including an aircraft carrier and a nuclear-powered submarine.</p> <p>"The statement they've released is crystal clear that this recent spate of tests was their way of signalling resolve to the United States and South Korea as they carried out military activities of their own," said Ankit Panda of the U.S.-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.</p> <p>The United States and South Korea held joint maritime exercises involving a U.S. aircraft carrier on Friday, a day after the South scrambled fighter jets in reaction to an apparent North Korean aerial bombing drill. read more</p> <p>The navy exercises involved the U.S. carrier Ronald Reagan and its strike group. The naval forces of South Korea, Japan and the United States also conducted joint drills before that.</p>

After the North Korea statement on Monday, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol's office said "it is important to accurately recognise the severity of security issues in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia to prepare properly," an official was quoted as saying.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida separately condemned Pyongyang's recent missile launches and vowed to work toward "the complete denuclearisation of North Korea in accordance with the U.N. Security Council resolutions."

"This series of ballistic missile (launches) and these various provocative acts are in clear violation of the U.N. Security Council resolutions and are absolutely unacceptable," Kishida told reporters when asked to comment on Monday's statement.

The U.S.-led UN forces are still technically at war with North Korea as the 1950-1953 Korean War ended in an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS

North Korea had only referred to one missile as having a tactical nuclear capability, but the statement clarifies that many systems, new and old, will be assigned such a role, Panda said.

If North Korea resumes nuclear testing, it could include development of smaller "tactical" warheads meant for battlefield use and designed to fit on short-range missiles such as the ones tested recently, analysts said.

South Korean and U.S. officials say there are signs North Korea could soon detonate a new nuclear device in underground tunnels at its Punggye-ri Nuclear Test site, which was officially shuttered in 2018.

Analysts say putting small warheads on short-range missiles could represent a dangerous change in the way North Korea deploys and plans to use nuclear weapons.

NEW MISSILE, UNDERWATER SILOS

On Oct. 4, the North test-fired a ballistic missile farther than ever before, flying what it said was a new intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) missile over Japan for the first time since 2017.

Analysts confirmed the photos released by state media do show a previously unseen IRBM.

"It's incredibly unusual, though, that they'd test a previously untested missile for the first time over Japan; it suggest a substantial degree of confidence in the engine," Panda said.

Among the other missiles shown in the photos were short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) that included KN-25 and KN-23 types as well as one with a heavy 2.5-ton payload, as well as a KN-09 300mm Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS).

The photos notably showed a test of a "navalised" KN-23 designed to be launched from a submarine. That missile was showcased in a test in the ocean last year, but this time the test was conducted in a way that simulated a launch from what state media called "a silo under a reservoir."

This year has seen North Korea test fire missiles from different locations and launch platforms, including trains, in what analysts say is an effort to simulate a conflict and make it difficult for enemies to detect and destroy the missiles.

The KN-23 is designed to perform a "pull-up" manoeuvre as it approaches a target, intended to help it evade missile defenses.

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SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-ria-state-agency-reports-fuel-tank-fire-kerch-bridge-crimea-2022-10-08/
GIST	<p>KYIV, Oct 10 (Reuters) - Russia bombed cities across Ukraine during rush hour on Monday morning, killing civilians and destroying infrastructure in apparent revenge strikes after President Vladimir Putin declared an explosion on the bridge to Crimea to be a terrorist attack.</p> <p>Missiles tore into Kyiv, the most intense strikes on the capital since Russia abandoned an attempt to capture it in the early weeks of the war. Explosions were also reported in Lviv, Ternopil and Zhytomyr in Ukraine's west, Dnipro and Kremenchuk in central Ukraine, Zaporizhzhia in the south and Kharkiv in the east. A witness in Russia's Belgorod region near the Ukrainian border also heard a blast from the border area.</p> <p>In Kyiv, attacks struck in the heart of the busy city centre. The body of a man in jeans lay in a street at a major intersection, surrounded by flaming cars. In a park, a soldier cut through the clothes of a woman who lay in the grass to try to treat her wounds. Another woman was bleeding nearby.</p> <p>City police said at least five people had been killed and 12 wounded.</p> <p>A huge crater gaped next to a children's playground in a central Kyiv park. The remains of an apparent missile were buried, smoking in the mud.</p> <p>More volleys of missiles struck the capital again later in the morning. Pedestrians huddled for shelter at the entrance of Metro stations and inside parking garages.</p> <p>"They are trying to destroy us and wipe us off the face of the earth," President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on the Telegram messaging app. "The air raid sirens do not subside throughout Ukraine. There are missiles hitting. Unfortunately, there are dead and wounded."</p> <p>TALKS WITH MISSILES</p> <p>Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba tweeted: "Putin's only tactic is terror on peaceful Ukrainian cities, but he will not break Ukraine down. This is also his response to all appeasers who want to talk with him about peace: Putin is a terrorist who talks with missiles."</p> <p>At one of Kyiv's busiest road junctions, a massive crater had been blown in the intersection. Cars were destroyed, buildings were damaged and emergency workers were on the scene. Two cars and a van near the crater were completely wrecked, blacked and pitted from shrapnel.</p> <p>Windows had been blown out of buildings at Kyiv's main Taras Shevchenko University. National Guard troops in full combat gear and carrying assault rifles were lined up outside an education union building.</p> <p>"The capital is under attack from Russian terrorists! The missiles hit objects in the city centre (in the Shevchenkivskyi district) and in the Solomyanskyi district. The air raids sirens are going off, and therefore the threat, continues," mayor Vitali Klitschko posted on social media.</p> <p>"The central streets of Kyiv have been blocked by law enforcement officers, rescue services are working."</p> <p>He later said important infrastructure had been hit.</p> <p>The strikes came two days after an explosion damaged the only bridge over the Kerch Strait to the Crimea peninsula, which Putin on Sunday called "an act of terrorism aimed at destroying critically important civilian infrastructure".</p> <p>"This was devised, carried out and ordered by the Ukrainian special services," he said in a video on the Kremlin's Telegram channel.</p>

Ukraine has not claimed responsibility for the blast on the bridge but has celebrated it. Senior Russian officials demanded a swift response from the Kremlin ahead of a meeting of Putin's security council on Monday.

KILLING 'TERRORISTS'

Commentators on Russian television have increasingly been calling for massive retaliation against Ukraine, with the military leadership facing public criticism for the first time as Russian forces have been beaten back on the battlefield.

The bridge, which Putin personally opened, is a major supply route for Russian forces in southern Ukraine and a symbol of Russia's control of Crimea, the peninsula it proclaimed annexed after its troops seized it in 2014.

Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev said ahead of the council meeting that Russia should kill the "terrorists" responsible for the attack.

"Russia can only respond to this crime by directly killing terrorists, as is the custom elsewhere in the world. This is what Russian citizens expect," he was quoted as saying by state news agency TASS.

Alexander Bastrykin, the head of Russia's Investigative Committee, said on Sunday a vehicle had exploded on the bridge, having travelled through Bulgaria, Georgia, Armenia, North Ossetia and Russia's Krasnodar region.

In southeastern Ukraine, Russian shelling overnight destroyed another apartment building in the city of Zaporizhzhia, regional governor Oleksandr Starukh said early on Monday. At least one person died and five were injured in the attack, a city official said.

The pre-dawn strikes were the third Russian missile attack against apartment buildings in four days in the city, the Ukrainian-held capital of one of four partially occupied regions Russia claims to have annexed this month.

Russia has faced major setbacks on the battlefield since the start of September, with Ukrainian forces bursting through the front lines and recapturing territory in the northeast and the south.

Putin responded to the losses by ordering a mobilisation of hundreds of thousands of reservists, proclaiming the annexation of occupied territory and threatening repeatedly to use nuclear weapons.

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HEADLINE	10/10 China fresh Covid lockdowns, restrictions
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/health-travel-china-beijing-covid-8d844288393a2f2ccb2cf7eac0b40b32
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — Chinese cities were imposing fresh lockdowns and travel restrictions after the number of new daily COVID-19 cases tripled during a weeklong holiday, ahead of a major Communist Party meeting in Beijing next week.</p> <p>The latest lockdown started Monday in Fenyang city in northern China's Shanxi province after a preliminary positive case was found in citywide testing the previous day, state broadcaster CCTV reported.</p> <p>In the nearby Inner Mongolia region, the capital Hohhot announced that outside vehicles and passengers would be prohibited from entering the city starting Tuesday. Hohhot has recorded more than 2,000 cases over about 12 days.</p> <p>China is one of the few places in the world still resorting to harsh measures to keep the disease from spreading. The long-ruling Communist Party is particularly concerned as it tries to present a positive image of the nation in the run-up to a once-in-five-years party congress that starts Sunday.</p>

	<p>Travel was down during an annual National Day holiday that began Oct. 1, as authorities discouraged people from leaving their cities and provinces. But the number of new daily cases has still grown to about 1,800 from 600 at the start of the break.</p> <p>Leaders don't want a major outbreak to cast a pall over the congress, but their strict "zero-COVID" approach has taken an economic toll, particularly on small businesses and temporary workers. Many in China hope the pandemic policy will ease after the meeting.</p> <p>Outbreaks have been reported across the country, with the largest in Inner Mongolia and the far-west Xinjiang region. Both have been recording several hundred new cases a day.</p> <p>Both Shanghai, where residents endured prolonged lockdowns earlier this year, and the national capital Beijing have had a small but growing number of cases. Two Shanghai districts announced closures of cinemas and other entertainment venues on Monday.</p> <p>Lining up for a free virus test several times a week has become the norm for many Chinese, with Beijing and other cities requiring a negative test result within 72 hours to enter parks, office buildings, shops and other public places.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 Military seeks to address mental health
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/health-philanthropy-mental-army-government-and-politics-b7599549f12f53adc51f9ab8388fc873?
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — After finishing a tour in Afghanistan in 2013, Dionne Williamson felt emotionally numb. More warning signs appeared during several years of subsequent overseas postings.</p> <p>"It's like I lost me somewhere," said Williamson, a Navy lieutenant commander who experienced disorientation, depression, memory loss and chronic exhaustion. "I went to my captain and said, 'Sir, I need help. Something's wrong.'"</p> <p>As the Pentagon seeks to confront spiraling suicide rates in the military ranks, Williamson's experiences shine a light on the realities for service members seeking mental health help. For most, simply acknowledging their difficulties can be intimidating. And what comes next can be frustrating and dispiriting.</p> <p>Williamson, 46, eventually found stability through a monthlong hospitalization and a therapeutic program that incorporates horseback riding. But she had to fight for years to get the help she needed. "It's a wonder how I made it through," she said.</p> <p>In March Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced the creation of an independent committee to review the military's mental health and suicide prevention programs.</p> <p>According to Defense Department data, suicides among active-duty service members increased by more than 40% between 2015 and 2020. The numbers jumped by 15% in 2020 alone. In longtime suicide hotspot postings such as Alaska — service members and their families contend with extreme isolation and a harsh climate — the rate has doubled.</p> <p>A 2021 study by the Cost of War Project concluded that since 9/11, four times as many service members and veterans have died by suicide as have perished in combat. The study detailed stress factors particular to military life: "high exposure to trauma — mental, physical, moral, and sexual — stress and burnout, the influence of the military's hegemonic masculine culture, continued access to guns, and the difficulty of reintegrating into civilian life."</p>

The Pentagon did not respond to repeated requests for comment. But Austin has publicly acknowledged that the Pentagon's current mental health offerings — including a Defense Suicide Prevention Office established in 2011 — have proven insufficient.

"It is imperative that we take care of all our teammates and continue to reinforce that mental health and suicide prevention remain a key priority," Austin wrote in March. "Clearly we have more work to do."

Last year the Army issued fresh guidelines to its commanders on how to handle mental health issues in the ranks, [complete with briefing slides and a script](#). But daunting long-term challenges remain. Many soldiers fear the stigma of admitting to mental health issues within the internal military culture of self-sufficiency. And those who seek help often find that stigma is not only real, but compounded by bureaucratic obstacles.

Much like the issue of [food insecurity in military families](#), a network of military-adjacent charitable organizations has tried to fill the gaps with a variety of programs and outreach efforts.

Some are purely recreational, such as an annual fishing tournament in Alaska designed to provide fresh air and socialization for service members. Others are more focused on self-care, like an Armed Services YMCA program that offers free childcare so that military parents can attend therapy sessions.

The situation in Alaska is particularly dire. In January, after a string of suicides, Command Sgt. Maj. Phil Blaisdell addressed his soldiers in an [emotional Instagram post](#). "When did suicide become the answer," he asked. "Please send me a DM if you need something. Please ..."

U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, said that while posting to Alaska can be a dream for some service members, it's a solitary nightmare for others that needs to be addressed.

"You've got to be paying attention to this when you see the statistics jump as they are," Murkowski said. "Right now, you've got everybody. You've got the Joint Chiefs looking at Alaska and saying, 'Holy smokes, what's going on up there?'"

The stresses of an Alaska posting are compounded by a shortage of on-the-ground therapists. During a visit to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska earlier this year, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth heard from base health care workers who say they are understaffed, burned out and can't see patients on a timely basis. If a soldier seeks help, they often have to wait weeks for an appointment.

"We have people who need our services and we can't get to them," one longtime counselor told Wormuth during a meeting. "We need staff and until we get them, we will continue to have soldiers die."

The annual [Combat Fishing Tournament](#) in Seward, Alaska, was formed to "get the kids out of the barracks, get them off the base for the day and get them out of their heads," said co-founder Keith Manternach.

The tournament, which was begun in 2007 and now involves more than 300 service members, includes a day of deep-water fishing followed by a celebratory banquet with prizes for the largest catch, smallest catch and the person who gets the sickest.

"I think there's a huge element of mental health to it," Manternach said.

It's not just in Alaska.

Sgt. Antonio Rivera, an 18-year veteran who completed three tours in Iraq and a year at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, freely acknowledges that he has serious PTSD.

"I know that I need help. There's signs and I've waited long enough," said Rivera, 48, who is assigned to Fort Hood in Texas. "I don't want my children to suffer because of me not going to get help."

He's doing yoga, but says he needs more. He's reluctant to seek help inside the military.

"Personally I'd feel more comfortable being able to talk to someone outside," he said. "It would allow me to open up a lot more without having to be worried about how it's going to affect my career." Others who speak up say it's a struggle to get assistance.

Despite the on-base presence of "tons of briefings and brochures on suicide and PTSD," Williamson said she found herself fighting for years to get time off and therapy.

Eventually, she entered a monthlong in-patient program in Arizona. When she returned, a therapist recommended equine-assisted therapy, which proved to be a breakthrough.

Now Williamson is a regular at the Cloverleaf Equine Center in Clifton, Virginia, where riding sessions can be combined with a variety of therapeutic practices and exercises. Working with horses has long been used as a form for therapy for people with physical or mental disabilities and children diagnosed with autism. But in recent years, it has been embraced for helping service members with anxiety and PTSD.

"In order to be able to work with horses, you need to be able to regulate your emotions. They communicate through body language and energy," said Shelby Morrison, Cloverleaf's communications director. "They respond to energies around them. They respond to negativity, positivity, anxiety, excitement."

Military clients, Morrison said, come with "a lot of anxiety, depression, PTSD. ... We use the horse to get them out of their triggers."

For Williamson, the regular riding sessions have helped stabilize her. She still struggles, and she said her long campaign for treatment has damaged her relationship with multiple superior officers. She's currently on limited duty and isn't sure if she'll retire when she hits her 20-year anniversary in March.

Nevertheless, she says, the equine therapy has helped her feel optimistic for the first time in recent memory.

"Now even if I can't get out of bed, I make sure to come here," she said. "If I didn't come here, I don't know where I would even be."

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HEADLINE	10/09 Anger rising in Iran protests hot spot
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/iran-health-middle-east-covid-iraq-e390b4d4f825cba822eb1b84f8b4cbe5?
GIST	<p>SULIMANIYAH, Iraq (AP) — Growing up under a repressive system, Sharo, a 35-year-old university graduate, never thought she would hear words of open rebellion spoken out loud. Now she herself chants slogans like "Death to the Dictator!" with a fury she didn't know she had, as she joins protests calling for toppling the country's rulers.</p> <p>Sharo said that after three weeks of protests, triggered by the death of a young woman in the custody of the feared morality police, anger at the authorities is only rising, despite a bloody crackdown that has left dozens dead and hundreds in detention.</p> <p>"The situation here is tense and volatile," she said, referring to the city of Sanandaj in the majority Kurdish home district of the same name in northwestern Iran, one of the hot spots of the protests.</p> <p>"We are just waiting for something to happen, like a time-bomb," she said, speaking to The Associated Press via Telegram messenger service.</p>

The anti-government protests in Sanandaj, 300 miles (500 kilometers) from the capital, are a microcosm of the leaderless protests that have roiled Iran.

Led largely by women and youth, they have evolved from spontaneous mass gatherings in central areas to scattered demonstrations in residential areas, schools and universities as activists try to evade an increasingly brutal crackdown.

Tensions rose again Saturday in Sanandaj after rights monitors said two protesters were shot dead and several were wounded, following a resumption of demonstrations. Residents said there has been a heavy security presence in the city, with constant patrols and security personnel stationed on major streets.

The Associated Press spoke to six female activists in Sanandaj who said suppression tactics, including beatings, arrests, the use of live ammunition and internet disruptions make it difficult at times to keep the momentum going. Yet protests persist, along with other expressions of civil disobedience, such as commercial strikes and drivers honking horns at security forces.

The activists in the city spoke on the condition their full names be withheld fearing reprisals by Iranian authorities. Their accounts were corroborated by three human rights monitors.

THE BURIAL

Three weeks ago, the news of the death of 22-year old Mahsa Amini in the custody of the morality police in Tehran spread rapidly across her home province of Kurdistan, of which Sanandaj is the capital. The response was swift in the impoverished and historically marginalized area.

As the burial was underway in Amini's town of Saqqez on Sept. 17, protesters were already filling Sanandaj's main thoroughfare, activists said.

People of all ages were present and began chanting slogans that would be repeated in cities across Iran: "Woman. Life. Freedom."

The Amini family had been under pressure from the government to bury Mahsa quickly before a critical mass of protesters formed, said Afsanah, a 38-year-old clothing designer from Saqqez. She was at the burial that day and followed the crowds from the cemetery to the city square.

Rozan, a 32-year old housewife, didn't know Amini personally. But when she heard the young woman had died in the custody of the morality police in Tehran and had been arrested for violating the Islamic Republic's hijab rules, she felt compelled to take to the street that day.

"The same thing happened to me," she said. In 2013, like Amini, she had ventured to the capital with a friend when she was apprehended by the morality police because her abaya, or loose robe that is part of the mandatory dress code, was too short. She was taken to the same facility where Amini later died, and fingerprinted and made to sign a declaration of guilt.

"It could have been me," she said. In the years since then Rozan, a former nurse, was fired from the local government health department for being too vocal about her views about women's rights.

After the funeral, she saw an elderly woman take a step forward and in one swift gesture, remove her headscarf. "I felt inspired to do the same," she said.

SUPPRESSION

In the first three days after the burial, protesters were plucked from the demonstrations in arrest sweeps in Sanandaj. By the end of the week, arrests targeted known activists and protest organizers.

Dunya, a lawyer, said she was one among a small group of women's rights activists who helped organize protests. They also asked shopkeepers to respect a call for a commercial strike along the city's main streets.

"Almost all the women in our group are in jail now," she said.

Internet blackouts made it difficult for protesters to communicate with one another across cities and with the outside world.

"We would wake up in the morning and have no idea what was happening," said Sharo, the university graduate. The internet would return intermittently, often late at night or during working hours, but swiftly cut off in the late afternoon, the time many would gather to protest.

The heavy security presence also prevented mass gatherings.

"There are patrols in almost every street, and they break up groups, even if its just two or three people walking on the street," said Sharo.

During demonstrations security forces fired pellet guns and tear gas at the crowd causing many to run. Security personnel on motorcycles also drove into crowds in an effort to disperse them.

All activists interviewed said they either witnessed or heard live ammunition. Iranian authorities have so far denied this, blaming separatist groups on occasions when the use of live fire was verified. The two protesters killed Saturday in Sanandaj were killed by live fire, according to the France-based Kurdistan Human Rights network.

Protesters say fear is a close companion. The wounded were often reluctant to use ambulances or go to hospitals, worried they might get arrested. Activists also suspected government informants were trying to blend in with the crowds.

But acts of resistance have continued.

"I assure you the protests are not over," said Sharo. "The people are angry, they are talking back to the police in ways I have never seen."

DISOBEDIENCE

The anger runs deep. In Sanandaj the confluence of three factors has rendered the city a ripe ground for protest activity — a history of Kurdish resistance, rising poverty and a long history of women's rights activism.

Yet the protests are not defined along ethnic or regional lines even though they were sparked in a predominantly Kurdish area, said Tara Sepehri Fars, a researcher for Human Rights Watch. "It's been very unique in that sense," she said.

There have been waves of protest in Iran in recent years, the largest in 2009 bringing large crowds into the streets after what protesters felt was a stolen election. But the continued defiance and demands for regime change during the current wave seem to pose the most serious challenge in years to the Islamic Republic.

Like most of Iran, Sanandaj has suffered as U.S. sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic devastated the economy and spurred inflation. Far from the capital, in the fringes of the country, its majority Kurdish residents are eyed with suspicion by the regime.

By the third week, with the opening of universities and schools, students began holding small rallies and joined the movement.

	<p>Videos circulated on social media showing students jeering school masters, school girls removing their headscarves on the street and chanting: “One by one they will kill us, if we don’t stand together.”</p> <p>One university student said they were planning on boycotting classes altogether.</p> <p>Afsanah, the clothing designer, said that she likes wearing the headscarf. “But I am protesting because it was never my choice.”</p> <p>Her parents, fearing for her safety, tried to persuade her to stay home. But she disobeyed them, pretending to go to work in the morning only to search for protest gatherings around the city.</p> <p>“I am angry, and I am without fear — we just need this feeling to overflow on the street,” she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/08 National Pedestrian Safety Month underway
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/transportation/national-pedestrian-safety-month-underway-as-fatalities-increase/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) marks October as National Pedestrian Safety Month. National Pedestrian Safety Month celebrates the right of everyone to walk or roll safely and reminds drivers of their responsibility to stay alert for pedestrians, cyclists, and other vulnerable road users.</p> <p>In 2020, 6,516 pedestrians were killed in the United States – an average of 18 pedestrians a day. And in 2021, pedestrian fatalities were projected to be up 13% over 2020.</p> <p>National Pedestrian Safety Month highlights the disparities in pedestrian safety and the importance of equity in road safety for all. Black and Native American pedestrians are disproportionately killed in the United States, as compared to white pedestrians. People who are American Indian and Alaska Native are almost three times more likely to die walking than the general public average, on a per 100,000 person basis. People who are Black or African American are more than 50% more likely to die walking than the general public average, on a per 100,000 person basis.</p> <p>In January, U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg announced the National Roadway Safety Strategy, which is focused on working with stakeholders to reduce traffic fatalities. The strategy includes initiatives across multiple DOT agencies, including the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA).</p> <p>“We live in an era when it is safer to fly in an airplane 30,000 feet above the ground than it is to walk down the street,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. “This National Pedestrian Safety Month, we must redouble our efforts to address the urgent national crisis on our nation’s roads, and do everything in our power to keep pedestrians safe.”</p> <p>“No one should die while walking to school, work, the grocery store, or for exercise. Our roads must be safe for everyone, inside and outside a vehicle,” said Acting NHTSA Administrator Ann Carlson. “National Pedestrian Safety Month draws attention to the risks people face while walking or rolling and reminds all drivers to watch for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.”</p> <p>“Safety for all road users is our top priority, and FHWA is working year-round with communities across our country to use a Safe System Approach to design roads that are safe for all users and encourage safe speeds,” said Acting Federal Highway Administrator Stephanie Pollack.</p> <p>“Every transit rider is, at some point, a pedestrian,” said Federal Transit Administrator, Nuria Fernandez. “To have a truly effective transportation system in our nation, we must ensure that every part of it is safe, from door to destination. National Pedestrian Safety Month allows us to really focus on the solutions that keep more Americans safe when they choose to walk.”</p>

“FMCSA’s mission is roadway safety and to prevent crashes and injuries involving large trucks and buses, including crashes that involve our most vulnerable roadway user, the pedestrian,” said FMCSA Administrator Robin Hutcheson. “We are an integral part of the National Roadway Safety Strategy and work within the Safe System Approach. We will continue to strive for safer people, safer vehicles, and safer speeds so that all who use our roadways can reach their destinations unharmed.”

Most pedestrian fatalities occur at night, which is why FHWA recently published the [Pedestrian Lighting Primer](#), a resource for transportation practitioners installing and improving pedestrian lighting at locations with existing and future pedestrian activity.

The FHWA has also partnered with FTA to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists near transit stops. The agencies released a new guide, [Improving Safety for Pedestrians and Bicyclists Accessing Transit](#), to address common safety issues likely to arise near transit stations, bus stops, and other places where bus or rail transit systems operate. The guide can help transit agencies, State and local roadway owners, and regional organizations in addressing pedestrian and bicyclist safety concerns in accessing transit.

As part of efforts to improve pedestrian safety, NHTSA is also launching a new paid media campaign from October 10-31 to educate drivers about the dangers of illegally passing stopped school buses and pedestrian safety for children when boarding and leaving a school bus.

National Pedestrian Safety Month spotlights a different aspect of the safe system approach each week:

- Week 1, Safer People: Celebrates the many benefits of walking and how we can encourage more walking by creating a safer system for people who walk or roll.
- Week 2, Safer Speeds & Safer Roads: Recognizes the importance of how motorists driving at safer speeds can save lives and highlights the vital role that safer roads play in reducing fatal crashes and injuries.
- Week 3, Safer Vehicles: Looks at vehicle solutions – vehicles that provide occupant crash protection, and technology can help prevent crashes from occurring in the first place. Technologies like pedestrian automatic emergency braking can help protect those outside of the vehicle. Vehicle standards can also help reduce the severity of injuries. The front ends of vehicles can be designed to reduce the impact of a crash.
- Week 4, Post-Crash Care: Focuses on providing bystander assistance and care to injured pedestrians, which may be critical in treating injuries and saving lives.

Earlier this year the Department launched the [Safe Streets & Roads for All Discretionary Grant Program](#), funded through President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law with \$5 billion in appropriated funds over the next five years. In fiscal year 2022 (FY22), up to \$1 billion is available for local communities to make the streets safer for people walking. Applications for this program recently closed and awards will be announced in the coming months.

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[Read more at the Department of Transportation](#)

HEADLINE	10/09 How a computer forecast model botched Ian
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/ap-explains-how-one-computer-forecast-model-botched-ian/
GIST	<p>As Hurricane Ian bore down on Florida, normally reliable computer forecast models couldn’t agree on where the killer storm would land. But government meteorologists are now figuring out what went wrong — and right.</p> <p>Much of the forecasting variation seems to be rooted in cool Canadian air that had weakened a batch of sunny weather over the East Coast. That weakening would allow Ian to turn eastward to Southwest Florida instead of north and west to the Panhandle hundreds of miles away.</p>

The major American computer forecast model — one of several used by forecasters — missed that and the error was “critical,” a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration postmortem of computer forecast models determined Thursday.

“It’s pretty clear that error is very consequential,” said former NOAA chief scientist Ryan Maue, now a private meteorologist who wasn’t part of NOAA’s postmortem.

Still, meteorologists didn’t miss overall with their official Hurricane Ian forecast. Ian’s eventual southwestern Florida landfall was always within the “cone of uncertainty” of the National Hurricane Center’s forecast track, although at times it was on the farthest edge.

But it wasn’t that simple. Computer forecast models, which weeks earlier had agreed on where Hurricane Fiona was going, were hundreds of miles apart as Ian chugged through the Caribbean.

The normally reliable American computer model, which had performed better than any other model in 2021 and was doing well earlier in the year, kept forecasting a Florida Panhandle landfall while the European model — long a favorite of many meteorologists — and the British simulation were pointing to Tampa or farther south.

Trying to avoid what meteorologists call the dreaded “windshield wiper effect” of dramatic hurricane path shifts, the official NOAA forecast stayed somewhere in between. Tampa — with lots of people and land vulnerable to gigantic storm surges — seemed to be the center of possible landfalls, or even worse just south of the eye so it would get the biggest surge.

Although people’s fears focused on Tampa, Ian didn’t.

The storm made landfall 89 miles (143 kilometers) to the south in Cayo Costa. For a large storm, that’s not a big difference and is within the 100-mile (161-kilometer) error bar NOAA sets. But because Tampa was north of the nasty right-side of the hurricane eye, it was spared the biggest storm surge and rainfall.

People wondered why the worst didn’t happen. There are meteorological, computer and communications reasons.

Overall, the European computer model performed best, the British one had the closest eventual Florida landfall but was too slow in timing and the American model had the highest errors when it came to track, NOAA’s Alicia Bentley said during the agency’s postmortem. But the American model was the best at getting Ian’s strength right, she said.

University of Albany meteorology professor Brian Tang said he calculated the American model’s average track error during Ian at 325 miles (520 kilometers) five-days out, while the European model was closer to 220 miles (350 kilometers).

“A lot of what we notice in the public is when there are big misses and those big misses affect people in populated areas,” Tang said in an interview.

Although this is technically not a miss, people who evacuated Tampa may think it is because the Fort Myers area got the brunt of the storm.

In some ways people are spoiled because the average track error in hurricane forecasts have gotten so much better. The three-day official forecast error was cut nearly in half over the last 10 years from 172 miles (278 kilometers) to 92 miles (148 kilometers), Tang said.

For years meteorologists touted the European model as better, because it uses more observations, is more complex but also takes longer to run and comes out later than the American one, Tang said. The American model has improved after a big boost of NOAA spending, but so has the European one, he added.

Return to Top	<p>The models use a similar physics formula to simulate what happens in the atmosphere. They usually rely on the same observations, more or less. But where they differ is how all those observations are put into the computer models, what kind of uncertainties are added and the timing of when the simulation starts, said University of Miami's Brian McNoldy.</p> <p>"You are guaranteed to end up differently," McNoldy said.</p> <p>It's not a problem if the models show similar tracks. But if they are widely different, as during Ian, "that makes you nervous," he said.</p> <p>People wrongly focus on funnel-like cone for where the hurricane is forecast to go instead of what it will do in specific locations, said MIT meteorology professor Kerry Emanuel. And in the cone people only pay attention to the middle line not the broader picture, so Emanuel and McNoldy want the line dropped.</p> <p>Another problem meteorologists say is that the cone is only where the storm is supposed to be with a 100-mile (161-kilometer) error radius, but when storms are big like Ian, their impacts of rain, surge and high wind will easily hit outside the cone.</p> <p>"The cone was never intended to convey the actual impacts. It was only intended to convey the tracks," said Gina Eosco, who heads a NOAA social science program that tries to improve storm communications.</p> <p>So for the first time, NOAA surveyed Florida, Georgia and South Carolina residents before Ian hit and will follow up after to see what risks the public perceived from the media and government information. That will help the agency decide if it has to change its warning messaging, Eosco said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 Largest radioactive waste melter starts
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/no-turning-back-worlds-largest-radioactive-waste-melter-starts-in-central-wa/
GIST	<p>There's no turning back at the Hanford site's vitrification plant after the heat-up of the world's largest melter for radioactive waste started Saturday, 20 years after construction of the plant began.</p> <p>The 300-ton melter now must remain hot continuously around the clock as it initially makes practice glass and eventually starts glassifying radioactive waste for the first time at the nuclear reservation.</p> <p>Glassification prepares the waste for permanent disposal.</p> <p>"Permanently removing the waste from Hanford's tanks and solidifying it is one of the most important elements of the entire cleanup mission, and melter heat-up is an extremely important step in that process," said David Reeploeg, the Tri-City Development Council vice president for federal programs and the executive director for Hanford Communities, a coalition of Hanford area local governments.</p> <p>The Department of Energy's goal is to start vitrifying radioactive waste stored in underground tanks, some since World War II, by the end of 2023.</p> <p>The 580-square-mile Hanford nuclear reservation near Richland in Central Washington produced about two-thirds of the nation's plutonium for its nuclear weapons program from World War II through the Cold War.</p> <p>Uranium fuel irradiated at Hanford was chemically reprocessed to remove plutonium. The mix of radioactive and other hazardous chemical waste from reprocessing has been stored in underground tanks, many of them prone to leaking. They hold 56 million gallons of the waste until it can be treated for disposal.</p>

The melter that is being heated up is the first of two at the \$17 billion plant's Low Activity Waste Facility and is expected to operate continuously for at least five years.

"When we finish heating up the first melter, that will be another significant step in commissioning the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant for future operations," said Val McCain, project director for Bechtel National.

Bechtel holds the contract for building, starting up and commissioning the waste treatment, or vitrification, plant to prepare it to treat radioactive waste.

The Department of Energy and Bechtel plan a "disciplined approach" to heating up the first melter to 2,100 degrees Fahrenheit, said Brian Vance, DOE's Hanford site manager.

Workers are expected to spend about two weeks gradually heating the melter as glass beads are added in batches to be melted during the initial test run. The molten glass that results will be poured into a stainless steel container and removed from the building.

Once the melter is fully commissioned and begins to treat radioactive waste, the glassified radioactive waste it produces will be buried at the Integrated Disposal Facility, a lined landfill in central Hanford.

Initially, the vitrification plant will only treat some of the least-radioactive tank waste, called low activity waste.

Construction on the plant's High Level Waste Facility has been mostly stalled since 2012 when technical issues were raised, causing DOE to shift its focus to treating low-activity waste first.

DOE faces a federal court deadline to also be treating high-level radioactive waste, in addition to the initial treatment of low-activity waste, by 2033 and to have the vitrification plant fully operating by 2036.

Melter must heat up slowly

Heating has started on the first melter using temporary startup heaters, with the heating planned to gradually transition to operational heaters.

The heating is done gradually to slowly dry out the insulation within the melter.

The melter's temperature cannot be dropped now without damaging the melter's insulation, or refractory, which can harden and become ineffective if the temperature cools.

Once the melter temperature reaches 2,100 degrees, the next month or two will be used for evaluation and checks of the initial process.

A Richland company, Fluid Controls and Components, is supplying 108,000 pounds of the glass beads, or frit, needed for the nonradioactive commissioning of the Low Activity Waste Facility.

It mimics waste by dissolving into a solid form at high temperatures.

"It was the first time we dealt with frit," said Russ Watson, vice president of the Richland company, as the company worked to make the first delivery. "The chemistry and physical profile of the frit were very complex. The specifications were strict, and the monitoring process was extensive."

Lessons learned from heating up the first melter will be used to begin the same process for the Low Activity Waste Facility's second melter.

Once both are at operating temperature, the facility next will heat a nonradioactive simulant of tank waste with glass former as part of preparations to treat radioactive waste.

	Because the melters have an expected life span of five years, preparations have begun to assemble spare melters to have them ready when the initial melters need to be replaced.
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HEADLINE	10/08 Iran protests enter 4th week amid violence
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/not-afraid-anymore-clashes-iran-113137452.html
GIST	<p>Schoolgirls chanted slogans, workers went on strike and protesters clashed violently with security forces across Iran on Saturday, as demonstrations over the death of Mahsa Amini entered a fourth week.</p> <p>Anger flared after the 22-year-old Iranian Kurd's death on September 16, three days after her arrest in Tehran by the notorious morality police for an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.</p> <p>Iran said on Friday an investigation found Amini had died of a longstanding illness rather than "blows" to the head, despite her family reportedly saying she had previously been healthy.</p> <p>But the women-led protests continued even as ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi posed for a group photograph with students at Tehran's all-female Al-Zahra University to mark the new academic year.</p> <p>Young women on the same campus were seen shouting "Death to the oppressor", said the Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights (IHR).</p> <p>In Amini's hometown Saez, in Kurdistan province, schoolgirls chanted "Woman, life, freedom" and marched down a street swinging headscarves in the air, in videos the Hengaw rights group said were recorded on Saturday.</p> <p>Gruesome videos were widely shared online of a man who was shot dead while sitting at the wheel of his car in Sanandaj, Kurdistan's capital.</p> <p>The province's police chief, Ali Azadi, said he was "killed by anti-revolutionary forces".</p> <p>Angry men appeared to take revenge on a member of the feared Basij militia in Sanandaj, swarming around him and beating him badly, in a widely shared video.</p> <p>Internet monitor Netblocks reported outages in Sanandaj, and national mobile network disruptions.</p> <p>Another shocking video shows a young woman said to have been shot dead in Mashhad, in what many on social media compared to footage of Neda Agha Soltan, a young woman who became an enduring symbol of the opposition after being shot dead at protests in 2009.</p> <p>- 'We will fight' -</p> <p>Despite internet restrictions designed to impede gatherings and stop images of the crackdown getting out, protesters have adopted new tactics to get their message across.</p> <p>"We are not afraid anymore. We will fight," said a large banner placed on an overpass of Tehran's Modares highway, according to online images verified by AFP.</p> <p>In other footage, a man is seen altering the wording of a large government billboard on the same highway from "The police are the servants of the people" to "The police are the murderers of the people".</p> <p>The ISNA news agency reported a heavy security presence in the capital, especially near universities. It said "scattered and limited gatherings" were held in Tehran during which "some demonstrators destroyed public property".</p> <p>Street protests were also reported in Isfahan, Karaj, Shiraz and Tabriz, among other cities.</p>

US-based campaigner and journalist Omid Memarian tweeted: "Videos coming out from Tehran indicate that there are so many protests, in every corner of the city, in small and big numbers."

Hengaw, a Norway-based Kurdish rights group, said "widespread strikes" took place in Saez, Sanandaj and Divandarreh, in Kurdistan province, as well as Mahabad in West Azerbaijan.

IHR says at least 92 protesters have been killed in the crackdown, which has fuelled tensions between Iran and the West, especially its arch-enemy the United States.

Raisi -- who in July called for the mobilisation of all state institutions to enforce hijab rules -- appealed for unity.

"Despite all the efforts of ill-wishers, the strong and hardworking people of Islamic Iran will overcome the problems ahead with unity and cohesion," he was quoted as saying Saturday on the presidency's website.

- 'Blind eye' -

Iran has repeatedly accused outside forces of stirring up the protests, and last week announced that nine foreign nationals -- including from France, Germany, Italy, Poland and the Netherlands -- had been arrested.

On Friday, France advised its nationals visiting Iran to "leave the country as soon as possible", citing the risk of arbitrary detention.

The Netherlands advised its citizens to avoid travelling to Iran or to leave when they can do so safely.

"There may be demonstrations which can turn violent. The police sometimes act harshly... authorities can also arbitrarily detain people with a foreign nationality," it said.

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian charity worker held in Tehran for six years until her release in March, called on the UK government to act over Iran's rights abuses.

"We cannot be indifferent about what is happening in Iran," she told Sky News. "And I think we have to hold Iran accountable."

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HEADLINE	10/08 National Guard struggles as troops leave
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/health-middle-east-covid-government-and-politics-987f5dbc245858f372eae3edc018bd
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — Soldiers are leaving the Army National Guard at a faster rate than they are enlisting, fueling concerns that in the coming years units around the country may not meet military requirements for overseas and other deployments.</p> <p>For individual states, which rely on their Guard members for a wide range of missions, it means some are falling short of their troop totals this year, while others may fare better. But the losses comes as many are facing an active hurricane season, fires in the West and continued demand for units overseas, including combat tours in Syria and training missions in Europe for nations worried about threats from Russia.</p> <p>According to officials, the number of soldiers retiring or leaving the Guard each month in the past year has exceeded those coming in, for a total annual loss of about 7,500 service members. The problem is a combination of recruiting shortfalls and an increase in the number of soldiers who are opting not to reenlist when their tour is up.</p> <p>The losses reflect a broader personnel predicament across the U.S. military, as all the armed services struggled this year to meet recruiting goals. And they underscore the need for sweeping reforms in how the</p>

military recruits and retains citizen soldiers and airmen who must juggle their regular full-time jobs with their military duties.

Maj. Gen. Rich Baldwin, chief of staff of the Army National Guard, said the current staffing challenges are the worst he's seen in the last 20 years, but so far the impact on Guard readiness is "minimal and manageable."

"However, if we don't solve the recruiting and retention challenges we're currently facing, we will see readiness issues related to strength begin to emerge within our units within the next year or two," he said.

According to Gen. Daniel Hokanson, head of the National Guard Bureau, both the Army and Air Guards failed to meet their goals for the total number of service members in the fiscal year that ended last Friday. The Army Guard's authorized total is 336,000, and the Air Guard is 108,300.

Baldwin said the Army Guard started the year with a bit more than its target total, but ends the fiscal year about 2% below the goal. Fueling that decline was a 10% shortfall in the number of current soldiers who opted to reenlist. Hokanson said the Air Guard missed its total goal by nearly 3%.

The reasons are many. But Guard officials suggest that young people may not be hearing the strong call to service that they did when the U.S. was at war in Iraq and Afghanistan, in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Baldwin said that as operations in Iraq and Afghanistan began to decline several years ago, states started to see higher than expected losses in personnel. In exit interviews, he said, troops cited a number of reasons why they weren't reenlisting. "But, unexpectedly, they found that one reason common to many of their soldiers was based on the perception that the war was over," said Baldwin, adding that they had joined to serve their country, not make the Army Guard their career.

The same may be true now, he said. In 2020 and 2021, Guard members were heavily involved in a range of domestic emergencies, from natural disasters and civil unrest to the pandemic, including medical care, COVID-19 testing and vaccines.

"Today, we have a much lower overseas deployment tempo than we've been used to and almost all of the COVID support missions have been ramped down," Baldwin said. "We join to make a difference by serving others and by being part of something bigger than ourselves. ... There may be a perception among both our soldiers and the civilians we are trying to recruit that we are on the backside of all of that and it's time to take advantage of the hot job market we have right now."

While the shortfalls for 2022 may be small percentages, the Guard is facing increasing losses over the next year due to the U.S. military's requirement that all troops get the COVID-19 vaccine. Currently about 9,000 Guard members are refusing to get the shot, and another 5,000 have sought religious, medical or administrative exemptions.

So far, no Guard members have been discharged for refusing the vaccine order. The National Guard is awaiting final instructions from the Army on how to proceed. Officials have said it's not clear when they will get that guidance.

With more losses likely on the horizon, Guard leaders are looking for ways to entice service members to join or reenlist. Hokanson said a critical change would be to provide Guard members with healthcare coverage. Currently, he said, about 60,000 Guardsmen don't have health insurance. And those who have insurance through their civilian employer have to go through a difficult process to move to the military's TRICARE program when they are on active-duty status.

The cost of providing health care coverage to those who don't have it would be about \$719 million a year, he said.

Other changes that could help, he said, would include expanding educational benefits and giving Guard members a financial bonus when they bring in new recruits. Such bonuses were used during the peak of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, but there were some problems that Hokanson and others said could be avoided now.

“We need to make adjustments based on the current environment because for the long term, our nation needs a National Guard the size that we are, or maybe even larger to meet all the requirements that we have,” said Hokanson. “It’s up to us to make sure that we fill our formations so that they’re ready when our nation needs us.”

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HEADLINE	10/09 Bay Area exodus: largest US income drop
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/10/09/san-francisco-bay-area-income-pandemic/
GIST	<p>The San Francisco Bay area has long been known as the home of Big Tech — and the extreme wealth the industry has created. But during the pandemic, as workers and companies relocated elsewhere, San Francisco experienced the largest drop in median household income among top U.S. metropolitan areas, according to data from the Census Bureau.</p> <p>The median household income in the metropolitan area that includes San Francisco, Oakland and Berkeley fell from \$121,551 in 2019 to \$116,005 in 2021, according to a census report this month.</p> <p>The drop of \$5,546, or 4.6 percent, was the largest decline by both dollar amount and percentage among the 25 most populous metropolitan areas in the country. The second highest was in the New York City area, which experienced a 4.2 percent — \$3,321 — decline in median household income. The D.C. region saw a 1.4 percent drop, from \$111,974 in 2019 to \$110,355 in 2021.</p> <p>The largest jump in either direction was in the sprawling Phoenix metropolitan area, where the median household income jumped 5.2 percent, from \$71,954 in 2019 to \$75,731 in 2021.</p> <p>The exodus of wealth from San Francisco tracks with the area’s loss of population during the pandemic, which was also the largest in the country, as remote workers fled for less expensive locales like Miami or more remote areas like Teton County, Wyo., and as some major companies, such as Oracle and Charles Schwab, relocated their headquarters to Texas. From 2020 to 2021, San Francisco lost 54,813 people, or 6.3 percent of its population, according to the Census Bureau — the largest portion of population lost in a major U.S. city during the pandemic.</p> <p>San Francisco’s population loss comes as many tech companies, including Twitter, Salesforce and Airbnb, have allowed their employees to go remote full-time. It also comes as the city has struggled with crime, with videos of brazen theft in drugstores and luxury shops becoming fodder for right-wing attacks on liberal policies. San Francisco Mayor London Breed (D) declared a state of emergency in December in the city’s Tenderloin neighborhood, long known for rampant drug use and homelessness, saying the situation there “calls for an emergency response.” Chesa Boudin, a lightning rod for critiques against far-left policies on crime, was recalled in June from his position as San Francisco’s district attorney.</p> <p>Breed’s office did not immediately respond to a request for comment Saturday evening about the census data.</p> <p>Although the drop in median household income could cause problems for tax revenue in the future, San Francisco is expecting a budget surplus for fiscal years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, Breed said in December, after she instructed departments to get “back to basics,” urging them to focus on pandemic recovery and “restoring the vibrancy” of San Francisco. In July, Breed signed a 2022-2023 budget that “prioritizes economic recovery, public safety, workers and families, homelessness and behavioral health needs.” Included is \$7.2 million over two years dedicated solely to cleaning the Tenderloin neighborhood.</p>

	Still, as the dust of the pandemic is still settling across much of the nation, San Francisco's downtown has been the slowest to recover among any city in the United States. According to a study by the University of California at Berkeley, downtown activity is at 31 percent of its pre-pandemic levels, the lowest among any large or medium-size U.S. city. That falls short of the 65 percent return in downtown D.C., 78 percent bounce in New York and 155 percent boom in Salt Lake City.
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HEADLINE	10/08 US HIMARS transform the battle for Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/himars-transform-battle-for-ukraine-modern-warfare-11665169716?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos2
GIST	<p>MYKOLAIV REGION, Ukraine—A global revolution in warfare is dramatically tipping the scales of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, putting in the hands of front-line troops the kind of lethality that until recently required aircraft, ships or lumbering tracked vehicles. It also has the capacity to change battlefields far from Eastern Europe.</p> <p>The centerpiece of the new battle order is the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or Himars. Provided by the U.S. and operated by Ukrainian soldiers since June, they are augmenting lightweight and precise weaponry that includes drones, Javelin antitank rockets and Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, enabled by GPS guidance and advanced microelectronics.</p> <p>Able to pick off Russian military bases, ammunition depots and infrastructure far behind front lines, Ukraine's 16 Himars helped its troops this summer halt a bloody Russian advance. Since last month, Ukrainians have seized back swaths of territory in their country's east and ground down Russian troops in the south. Washington recently pledged to deliver another 18 Himars.</p> <p>Within Kyiv's arsenal, Himars offer a unique combination of range, precision and mobility that allows them to do the job traditionally handled by dozens of launchers firing thousands of shells.</p> <p>By shrinking launchers and nearly guaranteeing hits on targets, Himars and the other equipment are upending century-old assumptions about how wars must be fought—and particularly about military supplies. Himars's vastly improved accuracy also collapses the massive logistical trail that modern infantry has demanded.</p> <p>"Himars is one part of a precision revolution that turns heavily equipped armies into something light and mobile," said Robert Scales, a retired U.S. Army major general who was among the first to envision Himars in the 1970s.</p> <p>Last month The Wall Street Journal gained rare access to a front-line Himars unit.</p> <p>One evening at dusk the men in this unit were making dinner when orders for their fifth mission of the day arrived: to target Russian barracks and a river barge ferrying munitions and tanks 40 miles away.</p> <p>Six men piled into their two Himars: a driver, targeter and commander in each, accompanied by the battery commander and a security detail in an armored personnel carrier. The commander plugged coordinate data into a tablet computer to determine the safest location for firing.</p> <p>Within minutes, the two Himars rumbled out from cover under an apricot grove toward the launch spot in a nearby sunflower field. Thirty seconds after arriving, they fired seven missiles in quick succession. Before the projectiles hit their targets, the trucks were returning to base camp.</p> <p>Ten minutes later came another pair of targets: Soviet-era rocket launchers some 44 miles away. Off rolled the Himars again and fired another barrage of missiles.</p> <p>Soon after, the soldiers were back at camp and finishing their dinner. Some pulled up videos on Telegram showing the fruit of their labor: burning Russian barracks.</p>

Ukraine's HIMARS rockets, which can fly 50 miles, have hit hundreds of Russian targets, including command centers, ammunition depots, refueling stations and bridges, choking off supplies to front-line units. Since stopping Russia's spring advance across Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, they are now targeting retreating Russian forces.

Ukrainian commanders estimate that HIMARS are responsible for 70% of military advances on the Kherson front, the unit's commander, Lt. Valentyn Koval, said. The four vehicles in his unit have killed hundreds of Russians and destroyed about 20 anti-aircraft batteries, he said.

Russian artillery—like most such systems since World War I—lacks precision. To destroy a target, troops generally level everything around it. Gunners following maps rain shells in a grid pattern that aims to leave no terrain in a quadrant untouched. Russian forces in Ukraine are lobbing dozens of shells per acre to hit one objective, analysts say.

HIMARS can do the job with one rocket carrying a 200-pound explosive warhead. Each Ukrainian HIMARS carries one six-rocket pod that can effectively land the punch of more than 100,000 lbs. of traditional artillery.

Artillery is cumbersome. During Operation Desert Storm in Iraq in 1991, it accounted for more than 60% of a U.S. division's weight. Moving it demands soldiers, trucks, fuel and time, plus additional soldiers and vehicles to protect those supply operations.

All that support sucks resources and makes a juicy target, as the world saw in the opening days of the Ukraine war, when a Russian supply convoy halted by Ukrainian attacks outside Kyiv became a 40-mile-long sitting duck.

"It's not just the precision of HIMARS that's revolutionary," said Gen. Scales. "It's the ability to reduce the tonnage requirements by an order of magnitude or better."

The supply chain for HIMARS units consists of factory-packaged rocket pods stashed at pickup points in the nearby countryside and usually hidden by foliage. A cargo truck deposits the camouflage-green pods—each a little bigger than a single bed—at a string of designated locations, not unlike a commercial delivery route.

HIMARS teams drive to the ammo drop spots, where a waiting three-man loading team removes spent pods and swaps in full ones within five minutes, using a crane integrated into the vehicle.

"HIMARS is one of, if not the most, efficient type of weapons on the battlefield," said Lt. Koval, a jocular 22-year-old with a Pokémon ringtone on his cellphone. "This gives us an opportunity to react quickly, hit in one place, move to another, and destroy effectively."

Russia's best truck-based rocket launchers, by contrast, can require around 20 minutes to set up in the launch spot and 40 minutes to reload—critical time when the enemy tries to return fire. The HIMARS can drive faster and has an armored crew cabin.

Ukrainian HIMARS teams stay lean by spending weeks in the field without returning to a larger base. Lt. Koval's unit, which received the first HIMARS in June, has spent the past three months sleeping in tents beside the launchers or inside nearby support vehicles.

The men, trained by U.S. instructors outside Ukraine, remain on standby for new targets, switching into action and just as casually returning to mundane activities like making coffee or playing cards.

On the front armor of one HIMARS, the soldiers painted a white grin below the Ukrainian word for "workhorse." On the other, whose odometer shows it has traveled over 13,000 miles, they stenciled 69 black skulls, commemorating significant confirmed hits.

Mission details arrive as geographic coordinates, with a target description and instructions on whether to use explosive missiles for armored targets or fragment charges for hitting personnel. Targeting tips come from sources including U.S. intelligence and partisans in occupied territories.

The Himars commanders then pick a suitable launch location and guide the vehicles into place. Inside the cab, the vehicle commander sits between the driver and the targeter, who feeds the mission data into a computer. When the vehicle reaches the launch site, the targeter presses one button to angle the missiles skyward and another button to fire.

The missiles roar into the night sky with a burst of flame, leaving a cloud of smoke over the field. The launcher is lowered and the vehicle speeds back to its tree cover.

“We are the juiciest target in the region,” said Lt. Koval. “So we need to maneuver to survive.”

Maneuverability is exactly why Himars was created as a downsized version of a tank-like weapon, the Multiple Launch Rocket System, which has also been provided to Ukraine by the U.K. and Germany. First used in Desert Storm, before the advent of precision artillery, massed batteries of the 12-rocket vehicles unleashed so much explosive force and shrapnel that Iraqi troops dubbed it “steel rain.”

MLRS’s heft means that only the largest military cargo jets can airlift it and they land far from the fighting. To move distances on land requires a flatbed truck. Himars was envisioned as a lighter, more agile version.

The push for nimble units equipped with lightweight gear became part of a broader effort to streamline the U.S. military after the Cold War that reached its peak under Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld starting in 2001, but was sidetracked by wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Himars, on wheels and with only six rockets, was a project that stayed on track. One initial shortcoming, the Pentagon discovered, was that six cluster bombs didn’t pack enough punch to destroy many targets. GPS-guided artillery, rolled out in the mid-1990s, gave Himars new life. Precision meant the rockets didn’t need to explode together for a giant blast. They could each pick off a different geolocated target.

“The precision revolution changes everything,” said Gen. Scales, who considers the transformation to be the kind of epoch-making military shift that redefines warfare and will now tip battlefield advantage from massed armies to small infantry units.

Such shifts were rare in the past, including the eclipse of infantry by horse-mounted warriors around the fourth century and the introduction of gunpowder to Europe a millennium later, said Gen. Scales, a military historian who served as commandant of the U.S. Army War College.

Others came around the U.S. Civil War with the introduction of precise rifles and artillery and machine guns, which proved so deadly in World War I, and at the start of World War II, when the German blitzkrieg merged motorized transportation with radio coordination of troops.

Now, inexpensive microprocessors are putting what Gen. Scales dubs “cheap precision” in the hands of Ukrainian soldiers.

“If I enter the coordinates of this hole,” said Lt. Koval, standing by a molehill the size of a shoebox, “it will hit this hole.”

On one particularly busy day in late August, the two Himars under Lt. Koval’s command worked in tandem with two others. When his pair ran out of ammunition, they dropped back to reload while the other duo advanced to fire. Lt. Koval said they tag-teamed for 37 hours without stopping to sleep and hit roughly 120 targets, enabling Ukrainian infantry to break Russian lines around the southern city of Kherson.

Washington was initially reluctant to provide Ukraine with Himars, fearing such a move could cause Moscow to retaliate against the U.S. or its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It has declined to supply more powerful rockets which can be fired up to 185 miles and would enable Ukraine to destroy sturdier targets, like concrete bridges that they have so far only been able to blow holes through.

In a sign that Ukraine's additional firepower is taking a toll on Moscow's forces, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has told Russian troops to make Ukraine's long-range weaponry a priority target.

Himars operators say the biggest threat comes from Russia's kamikaze drones, buttressed recently by more effective Iranian systems, but they feel well protected by Ukrainian anti-air systems and special forces. Lt. Koval's crew abandoned two firing missions this summer out of caution when a drone was spotted nearby, but he said no Himars have been hit.

"We're always on the move," said Lt. Koval.

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HEADLINE	10/08 Phoenix faces deadliest year heat deaths
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/08/phoenix-arizona-heat-deaths-record-year
GIST	<p>Extreme heat contributed to as many as 450 deaths in the Phoenix area this summer, in what could be the deadliest year on record for the desert city in Arizona.</p> <p>The medical examiner for Maricopa county, which includes Phoenix, has so far confirmed 284 heat-related deaths, while investigations into 169 more suspected heat fatalities are ongoing. The highest number of deaths – and emergency hospital visits – coincided with the hottest days and nights.</p> <p>The temperature hit 110F or higher on 22 days this year, yet it was only the 20th hottest summer on record, according to the National Weather Service (NWS). It did not drop below 80F on 75% of nights between June and August. Heat effects are cumulative and the body cannot begin to recover until the temperature drops below 80F.</p> <p>Overall, the suspected heat death toll is 36% higher than for the same period last year, despite a good rainy season which helped keep temperatures – and heat deaths – down from late July. And while heat will be ruled out in some cases, 2022 totals look to surpass last year's historic high.</p> <p>"Deaths tend to increase during our hottest days, especially when combined with very warm nights," said Marvin Percha, a meteorologist with the NWS Phoenix. "The long-term increase in summertime temps seems to be playing at least some role in the increasing number of heat deaths over the years."</p> <p>Phoenix, the capital of Arizona and the country's fifth-largest city, with 1.6 million people, is accustomed to a hot desert climate, but temperatures are rising due to global heating and urban development, which has created a sprawling asphalt and concrete heat island that traps heat especially at night.</p> <p>In recent years, daily temperature highs have been smashed frequently and this year the city broke three daytime and nine night-time records. 911 calls for heat-related medical emergencies rose 13% compared with last year.</p> <p>Heat deaths are preventable, yet have doubled since 2016, and it's not just down to the heat.</p> <p>Phoenix is also one of the fastest growing and most expensive cities in the US, with a crippling shortage of affordable housing and a rapidly growing homeless population.</p> <p>According to the county's annual count, there were 5,029 people sleeping on the streets in January – triple the number of unsheltered people compared with 2016. Being outside without adequate shade and water increases the risk of medical complications and deadly heat exposure.</p>

Despite several new shelters opening this year, the situation has gotten even worse. Across the city, there are men and women sleeping rough in parks, parking lots and shop doorways, and behind dumpsters and along canals.

Last week, outreach workers counted 1,006 people sleeping in tents, under makeshift shelters or on the ground in just one relatively compact downtown area known as the zone, where many of the city's shelters and homeless services are concentrated. On very hot days the temperature can reach 160F on the asphalt where people are camped.

"There's lots of new energy and effort around long-term housing solutions, but big system pieces needed to end homelessness don't move quickly," said Amy Schwabenlender, executive director of the Human Services Campus in the zone.

[Eviction rates in Maricopa county are higher](#) than pre-pandemic levels, and inflation hit 13% in Phoenix last month – a record for any US city according to data going back 20 years. One in five confirmed heat deaths this year occurred indoors, and initial reports suggest the soaring cost of living may have played a role as 80% of victims did not have functioning air conditioning.

Still, this year's high death toll is alarming given the cooling seasonal rains and the city's first coordinated effort to reduce heat deaths, which involved more than a dozen agencies in addition to a gaggle of non-profits and grassroots activists.

"It's not just about heat, it's a multifactorial problem that requires more coordination and creativity to line up the different pieces of the solutions portfolio," said David Hondula, who leads the city's – and North America's – first extreme heat office. "Messaging alone won't help, nor will handing out water bottles or investing in housing alone."

Tackling the complex and interconnected issues that increase the risk of heat emergencies – lack of affordable housing, homelessness, [substance misuse](#), inflation, inadequate shade and rising temperatures – will take time, money and political will.

In the meantime, Hondula's heat team will be diving into the data from 2022 to figure out which services or interventions saved lives and should be expanded, and which should be reformed or scrapped.

Hondula added: "This is not where we want to be; our goal is zero deaths."

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HEADLINE	10/09 Taiwan citizen warriors prepare for China
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/09/taiwans-citizen-warriors-prepare-to-confront-looming-threat-from-china
GIST	<p>On a sleepy Sunday morning 50 anonymous young men and women have wandered into a nondescript Taipei office for training with Kuma Academy. The one-day course includes cross-strait geopolitics and strategy, invasion scenarios, and disinformation. Later, they're taught the difference between the opposing armies' uniforms, and how to tie a tourniquet.</p> <p>The citizen warriors are being trained with a 1bn Taiwan dollar (£28m) donation from businessman Robert Tsao. He made global headlines last month when he pledged the money to train "three million people in three years" and 300,000 sharpshooters for a civilian militia. The "warrior" training would be in conjunction with the academy, a volunteer civilian training organisation that launched in 2021.</p> <p>The proposal answered a growing domestic appetite for civilians to be better prepared for a Chinese invasion. Beijing has pledged to annex Taiwan, under a disputed claim that it is a province of China. Officials emphasise they prefer peaceful means, but with a majority of Taiwanese opposed to unification, that would mean surrender, which Taiwan has vowed it will not do.</p>

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the efforts of the far smaller country to defend itself have only further inspired Taiwan's people, many of whom are signing up to military and urban workshops and seminars.

Tsao, 75, who made his fortune as founder of United Microelectronics Corp (UMC), Taiwan's second largest microchip manufacturer, and as an art collector, wasn't always on this side. Raised in Taiwan under the nationalist military rule of the Kuomintang, Tsao says he was taught to be wary of communism, but was reassured "when they started to reform".

He has had extensive business dealings with China, and in 2007 lobbied for a unification referendum. In 2011 he renounced his Taiwanese citizenship and split his time between Singapore and Hong Kong, angry at investigations into his business. He was in Hong Kong when the pro-democracy protests began, and it was the Yuen Long incident, when gangs of thugs attacked commuters without punishment, which ended any goodwill Tsao still had towards Beijing.

"That especially told me that in any talk or deal with the Chinese Communist party you will get nothing, that it's very dangerous," he said, describing it as a "crime syndicate disguised as a nation".

"It has shrunk free speech, arrested human rights lawyers, Uyghurs, cracked down on freedom of Hong Kong and now they threaten Taiwan any way they can."

This year, Tsao returned to Taiwan, regained his citizenship and committed to its defence, announcing a US\$100m donation in August for "whatever was helpful". He was introduced to the Kuma Academy, one of the more organised grassroots training groups to spring up in recent years. In September he announced the pledge for warrior training and plans to develop drones for the military.

Kuma proposed training up to 20,000, Tsao says. "But from what I know Xi Jinping may start an invasion in five years, so I said we need to train three million people, in three years."

Back at the academy, one 20-year-old student tells the Observer she decided to come when China launched military drills around Taiwan after a visit by US speaker Nancy Pelosi.

"The best thing I learned today was about understanding conspiracies, and now I can identify what is fake and what is trustable," she says, adding that her fears for war are exacerbated by what she reads online.

"The information today has settled my heart, made me panic less, and I can help others."

It's basic stuff, but Kuma Academy and Tsao hope participants will be inspired to specialise their skills and develop local defence units, perhaps in line with Taiwan's existing network of volunteer emergency responders.

"We want to decentralise civil defence, and they should work with their neighbourhoods to create their own groups and plans," course trainer and former politician, He Chung-hui, tells the Observer.

Taiwan's government has not answered calls for a formal civilian militia. It is prioritising weapons procurement and bolstering the existing armed services. Mandatory conscription was being phased out but is likely returning in preparation for a Chinese attack.

No one knows when that might be. Estimates of Beijing reaching invasion capability start as early as 2025, but its intent is still a guessing game.

Chinese officials recently warned that Taiwanese would be subject to "re-education" after invasion, and that independence advocates would be punished. Tsao, potentially high on that list, sometimes wears a bulletproof vest in public. He will neither return to nor transit through Hong Kong or China out of security concerns, and says he is committed to the island.

	<p>“China is marching to disaster, like Putin, but they can’t stop,” he says.</p> <p>“My message to local Taiwanese is: our fate is in our hands. If you fight as bravely as Ukrainians, you will preserve your freedom and democracy.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/08 Russia notorious general in Ukraine war
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/08/russia-appoints-notorious-general-sergei-surovikin-ukraine
GIST	<p>Russia has appointed a notorious general who opened fire on pro-democracy protesters in the 1990s as its first overall commander for the war in Ukraine, as the Kremlin struggles to halt a Ukrainian counteroffensive that has left its forces in disarray.</p> <p>The appointment of Gen Sergei Surovikin came on the same day as Vladimir Putin was dealt a humiliating blow after an explosion on the Kerch bridge sank a section of the motorway into the Kerch Strait and caused a major fire on the railway.</p> <p>Surovikin is a veteran commander who led the Russian military expedition in Syria in 2017, where he was accused of using “controversial” tactics including indiscriminate bombing against anti-government fighters.</p> <p>His appointment is the first of an overall battlefield commander for Russian troops in Ukraine. It may indicate that Moscow now understands that its military is in danger of collapse in Ukraine, with Kyiv’s forces advancing in all four of the regions that Putin claims to have “annexed”.</p> <p>A former head of the Russian Aerospace Forces, Surovikin was installed in the summer as head of the southern military grouping, replacing Gen Alexander Dvornikov, who lasted just months in the position.</p> <p>He is seen as having improved the effectiveness of Russian forces fighting in east Ukraine, where poor communication and cooperation has plagued the Russian invasion force.</p> <p>Yet Surovikin also has a checkered history that includes two stints in jail for allegedly selling weapons and for leading a military column against protesters during the 1991 coup. He has also previously served in Tajikistan and Chechnya.</p> <p>“For over 30 years, Surovikin’s career has been dogged with allegations of corruption and brutality,” wrote British intelligence officials in a recent report on Surovikin’s likely promotion to lead the southern military group.</p> <p>During the 1991 coup d’état attempt launched by Soviet hardliners, Surovikin, then a captain, led a rifle division that drove through barricades erected by pro-democracy protesters. Three men were killed in the clash, including one who was crushed.</p> <p>“It is highly symbolic that Sergei Surovikin, the only officer who ordered to shoot on revolutionaries in August 1991 and actually killed three people, is now in charge of this last-ditch effort to restore Soviet Union,” wrote Grigory Yudin, a Russian political scientist and sociologist. “These people knew what they were doing, and they know now.”</p> <p>With the appointment, the Kremlin may also be seeking to combat criticism from nationalists who have accused the army of mismanaging the war in Ukraine and of failing to use harsh tactics to try to force the Kyiv government to submit.</p> <p>Among Russians who welcomed the appointment of Surovikin was Yevgeny Prigozhin, the notorious founder of the Wagner private military company and a vocal critic of the military leadership.</p>

	<p>“Surovikin is the most able commander in the Russian army,” Prigozhin said, according to a statement put out by Concord, a company he is associated with. He is a “legendary figure, he was born to serve his motherland faithfully.”</p> <p>“Having received an order [in 1991], Surovikin was that officer who without hesitation got in his tank and went forward to save his country.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 Day 228 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/09/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-228-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelling in the south-eastern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia has killed at least 17 people, city official Anatoliy Kurtev has said. Anton Gerashchenko, a senior presidential adviser to Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said preliminary figures suggested 17 dead and 40 wounded after an attack on residential housing. “The Russians are not able to respond on the battlefield and therefore hit the cities in the rear,” he said. The city lies 125km (80 miles) from the Russian-held nuclear power plant that is Europe’s largest. • Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has vowed that those who ordered and issued the “merciless” strikes in Ukraine’s south-eastern city of Zaporizhzhia will be held responsible. In a post on his Facebook page, he said the attack was “evil” and that everyone involved in the incident “will be held accountable”. • The damage from Saturday’s explosion on the Kerch bridge in Crimea could have a “significant” impact on Russia’s “already strained ability to sustain its forces” in southern Ukraine, the latest UK intelligence update says. The Ministry of Defence said the blast “will likely touch President Putin closely” for reasons including that it came hours after his 70th birthday, he personally sponsored and opened the bridge, and its construction contractor was a childhood friend. The ministry said the bridge’s rail crossing had played a key role in moving heavy military vehicles to the southern front during Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. • Russian divers will on Sunday examine the extent of damage from the blast on the Kerch bridge linking Crimea to Russia. Russian news agencies quoted the deputy prime minister, Marat Khusnullin, as saying the divers would start work on Sunday at 6am (0300 GMT), with a more detailed survey above the waterline expected to be complete by the end of the day. • Vladimir Putin signed a decree late on Saturday tightening security for the Kerch bridge and for energy infrastructure between Crimea and Russia after the explosion that crippled the heavily guarded bridge. Russia’s federal security service, the FSB, is in charge of the effort. By Saturday evening, Russia said the rail link across the bridge was operational again but road traffic would remain constricted. • An adviser to Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the explosion on the Kerch bridge was just “the beginning”. Mykhailo Podolyak wrote on Twitter: “Everything illegal must be destroyed, everything that is stolen must be returned to Ukraine, everything occupied by Russia must be expelled.” Three people were killed on Saturday after a truck bomb caused a fire and the collapse of a section of the bridge, Russian officials said. • Zelenskiy said Ukrainian troops were involved in “very tough fighting” near Bakhmut, a strategically important eastern town Russia is trying to take. Reuters reported that while Ukrainian troops had recaptured thousands of square kilometres of land in recent offensives in the east and south, officials say progress is likely to slow once Kyiv’s forces meet more determined resistance. Zelenskiy said in his nightly address: “We are holding our positions in the Donbas, in particular in the Bakhmut direction, where it is very, very difficult now – very tough fighting.” • The German defence minister has told Nato it must do more to bolster security, warning: “We cannot know how far Putin’s delusions of grandeur can go.” Christine Lambrecht said Germany had heard of Russian threats to Lithuania for implementing EU sanctions and that they must be taken seriously and be prepared, Reuters reported. • The UK has rejected Moscow’s call for a secret ballot in the UN general assembly next week on whether to condemn Russia’s move to annex four regions in Ukraine and requested that the

	193-member body vote publicly. The general assembly is set to vote on a draft resolution that would condemn Russia's "illegal so-called referenda" and the "attempted illegal annexation".
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HEADLINE	10/08 Secret US talks fail in world's unseen war
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/08/world/africa/ethiopia-tigray-war-talks-us.html
GIST	<p>NAIROBI, Kenya — As fighting flared in northern Ethiopia last month, shattering a five-month truce and reigniting a destructive civil war, a small United States military aircraft carrying senior American diplomats crossed the front line on a secret mission to halt the bloodshed.</p> <p>Flying low and taking measures to avoid detection, the jet traveled to Tigray, the besieged northern region that has been at war with the Ethiopian government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, before continuing to Djibouti for a round of tense peace talks, according to people familiar with the negotiations. In a measure of the distrust between the two sides, Mike Hammer, the American envoy to the region, flew aboard the U.S. Air Force plane as an assurance that it would not be shot down.</p> <p>Tigray is the world's unseen war, a sprawling conflict hidden behind a punishing government siege that has severed communications in the region, locked out reporters and left 5.2 million people in urgent need of food aid. United Nations investigators have called it a war crime.</p> <p>But in recent weeks the fighting has surged to its most intense level yet — and the secret efforts at peace have given way to raging combat that many fear could quickly spiral across the Horn of Africa, destabilizing the region.</p> <p>While the world's gaze is largely fixed on the war in Ukraine, the conflict in Tigray is also huge, with three major armed forces, including two of Africa's largest armies, those of Ethiopia and of Eritrea, battling on multiple fronts across a rugged region twice the size of Switzerland.</p> <p>The latest fighting, featuring pitched battles, drone strikes and artillery barrages, has pulled in neighboring countries and involves hundreds of thousands of combatants, by most estimates. At least a hundred civilians have died and as many as 500,000 have fled their homes in recent weeks, a senior United Nations official said.</p> <p>A diplomatic drive to end the war has also been hidden. An official peace process led by the African Union has been hobbled by disputes over mediators and money for most of the past year, officials say, prompting Western officials to try to carry the ball. Since March, the United States has held three secret meetings outside Ethiopia — in Djibouti and in the Seychelles — bringing together warring leaders for the first time since the war erupted in November 2020.</p> <p>Details of the latest meeting on Sept. 9, which was attended by Mr. Abiy's national security adviser, Redwan Hussien, and his justice minister, Gedion Timothewos, were provided by Western and Tigrayan officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss events that the Americans insisted should remain confidential.</p> <p>A United States official confirmed that a U.S. Air Force Beechcraft aircraft had operated the flight across Tigray on behalf of the State Department.</p> <p>Now hopes for peace lie with a surprise announcement this week by the African Union, inviting both sides to talks in South Africa.</p> <p>But the prospects for that initiative are uncertain. Tigrayan leaders have accused the mediator, the former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, of siding with Mr. Abiy. After initially scheduling talks for this weekend, the African Union said on Thursday only that they would take place "soon."</p> <p>Events on the battlefield could move faster than that.</p>

Reliable information about the last six weeks of fighting is hard to obtain. But interviews with Western and Tigrayan officials — as well as video footage, satellite images and witness accounts gathered over the region's few working phone lines — offered a keyhole view of a metastasizing conflict that is exacting a high cost on civilians.

Ethiopian drone strikes [hit a kindergarten](#) in August, killing several children, and a [U.N. food truck](#) in late September. An airstrike on Tuesday in Adi Da'ero, near the border with Eritrea, hit a center for refugees, killing at least 50 people, said two humanitarian officials in the area who spoke on the condition of anonymity for their safety.

After an earlier strike on the same town, video footage [showed the lifeless body of a woman](#) being pulled from smoking rubble.

"The fighting is intense, and the casualties are immense," Gen. Tsadkan Gebretensae, a former chief of the Ethiopian military, now a strategist for the Tigrayans, said in a phone interview.

A spokeswoman for Mr. Abiy and spokesmen for the Ethiopian government and military did not respond to requests for comment. The government has [denied it strikes civilian targets](#).

The most striking change in recent weeks is the return to the war of Isaias Afwerki, the dictatorial leader of the nation to the north, Eritrea, and his army, one of the largest in Africa, which was accused of many atrocities in earlier fighting.

Eritrean troops have pounded Tigray with artillery barrages from across the border and captured the Tigrayan town of Shiraro, where recent [satellite images](#) showed hundreds of marching soldiers and lines of artillery field guns. In an unusual move, several thousand Ethiopian soldiers have been flown into Eritrea to help with the assault, officials said.

Inside Eritrea, the country has "fully mobilized its armed forces," calling all men below the age of 55 to military service, Annette Weber, the European Union envoy to the Horn of Africa, wrote to E.U. member states last month in a confidential briefing obtained by The New York Times.

"The war rages on with high military buildup on all sides, increased intensity and Eritrean participation," Ms. Weber wrote in the leaked briefing, which first appeared on [the website of the World Peace Foundation](#), a program at Tufts University.

"Tens of thousands are injured or killed on the various battlefronts, many with the belief that surrender is no option," the briefing continued. "Much is at stake."

The stakes for civilians in northern Ethiopia were outlined in [a Sept. 22 report by U.N. investigators](#) that accused both sides of war crimes, including massacres and sexual assaults. But it singled out Mr. Abiy's forces for "using starvation as a method of warfare" and for "sexual slavery" of Tigrayan women held in military camps.

At Tigray's largest hospital, doctors say that patients are dying from cancer, kidney disease and other treatable conditions for want of medicines. A recent study found that newborn babies in Tigray are dying at four times the prewar rate.

"One day we will be free of the fear of being bombed from the air," Dr. Fasika Amdeslase, a surgeon in Tigray with rare internet access, [wrote on Twitter](#). "One day we will be able to treat our patients."

The fighting is the latest twist of a war in which the fortunes of both sides have oscillated wildly.

Just a year ago, Tigrayan fighters were marching on the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, after driving government forces from Tigray. But in November they were forced to retreat after Mr. Abiy obtained armed drones from Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and China.

The United States changed tack in January when President Biden made his [first phone call to Mr. Abiy](#), easing the Ethiopian leader's fears that the United States intended to try to oust him, and setting the stage for secret talks, two American officials said.

Two months later, on March 10, a U.S. Army Beechcraft airplane carried the Tigrayan General Tsadkan to the Seychelles, where he met in a hotel with Field Marshal Birhanu Julia, the head of the Ethiopian military.

The two men hammered out a humanitarian truce that, weeks later, allowed aid convoys to roll back into Tigray. A second American-brokered meeting took place in Djibouti in June.

But the truce was also an opportunity for both sides to rearm, and as the summer wore on Mr. Abiy appeared to drag his feet, officials said. His delegates at talks lacked the authority to make decisions, and he appeared reluctant to restore essential services like electricity and banking to Tigray.

The slide back to war on Aug. 24 prompted criticism from experts who say the Biden administration failed to apply enough pressure to force the warring groups to substantive peace talks.

"The diplomacy is clearly not working," said Cameron Hudson, a former State Department official now affiliated with the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "There's a lot of effort but they are not achieving anything. So we have to question if we're using the right tools."

The re-emergence of Mr. Isaias, the Eritrean leader, adds a volatile new element to the conflict. On Sept. 20 Mr. Hammer, the American envoy, called for Eritreans to return home from the fighting in Tigray.

Other countries in the region are also getting sucked in — as well as a contingent of United Nations peacekeepers.

Sudan has been a "conduit" for flights carrying arms to Tigray, Ms. Weber said in her confidential briefing. In May, about 650 ethnic Tigrayans, on U.N. peacekeeping duty in Sudan, deserted the Ethiopian Army and sought asylum, said two U.N. officials in Sudan who spoke anonymously because of the sensitivity of the situation. By August, about 400 of those peacekeepers had vanished, the officials said, mostly into Tigray to fight alongside refugees who had been recruited from camps along the border.

Mr. Hudson, the analyst, said it seemed that Washington was hesitating to take harder action, for instance deploying sanctions that Mr. Biden authorized in November, in the hope that Ethiopia might once again become a strong American partner in the region.

But with Ethiopia straining to the breaking point from the war in Tigray, as well as violent strife in other regions like Oromia, such a notion is "delusional," Mr. Hudson said.

"We're not going back to those old days, and certainly not under Abiy," he said.

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HEADLINE	10/08 Distracted Russia losing Soviet sphere grip
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/08/world/asia/russia-putin-soviet.html
GIST	With the Kremlin distracted by its flagging war more than 1,500 miles away in Ukraine, Russia's dominion over its old Soviet empire shows signs of unraveling. Moscow has lost its aura and its grip, creating a disorderly vacuum that previously obedient former Soviet satraps, as well as China, are moving to fill.

On the mountain-flanked steppes of southwestern Kyrgyzstan, the result in just one remote village has been devastating: homes reduced to rubble, a burned-out school and a gut-wrenching stench emanating from the rotting carcasses of 24,000 dead chickens.

All fell victim last month to the worst violence to hit the area since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union — a brief but bloody border conflict between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, both members of a Russia-led military alliance dedicated to preserving peace but which did nothing to halt the mayhem.

“Of course, they are distracted by Ukraine,” Kyrgyzstan’s president, Sadyr Japarov, lamented in an interview in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz capital.

Before President Vladimir V. Putin invaded Ukraine in February, Russia played an outsized role in the affairs of Central Asia and also the volatile Caucasus region, in what had passed for a far-flung Pax Russica. In January, it rushed troops to Kazakhstan to help the government there calm a wave of violent domestic unrest. In 2020, it sent around 2,000 armed “peacekeepers” to the Caucasus to enforce a Moscow-mediated truce between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Today, Armenia is fuming. Its prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, who has been a close ally, appealed to Moscow in vain last month for help to halt renewed attacks by Azerbaijan. Furious at Russia’s inaction, Armenia is now threatening to leave Moscow’s military alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

The Kazakh government that Mr. Putin helped prop up in January is veering far from the Kremlin’s script over Ukraine, and is looking to China for help in securing its own territory, parts of which are inhabited largely by ethnic Russians, and which Russian nationalists view as belonging to Russia.

And here along the mountainous border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, long-running quarrels between farmers over land, water and smuggled contraband escalated last month into a full-scale conflict involving tanks, helicopters and rockets, as the armies of the two countries fought each other to a standstill.

The conflict, according to Kyrgyz officials, killed scores of civilians and drove more than 140,000 people from their homes. It also left many local residents and officials in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, asking why Moscow — long seen as an attentive guardian of stability on the combustible fringes of the former Soviet empire — had barely lifted a finger.

“Russia could have stopped all this in a second. But it did nothing. Why did it let this happen?” asked Zaynaddin Dubanaev, a 75-year-old Russian-language teacher at the burned-out school in Ak-Sai, a Kyrgyz village next to a fenced-off patch of Tajik territory.

Moscow’s security alliance has long been touted by Mr. Putin as Russia’s answer to NATO and an anchor of its role as the dominant (and often domineering) force across vast swaths of the former Soviet Union. But now the bloc is barely functioning. Five of its six members — Armenia, Belarus, Russia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan — have been involved in wars this year, while the sixth, Kazakhstan, has seen violent internal strife.

In response, China is newly asserting itself, while the United States also sees an opening, pressing Kyrgyzstan to sign a new bilateral cooperation agreement. It would replace one scrapped in 2014 after Russian pressure forced the closure of an American air base outside Bishkek that had been set up to fuel warplanes flying over Afghanistan.

“Until Ukraine, China and Russia were not interested in open competition in Central Asia,” said Asel Doolotkeldieva, a senior lecturer at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, a center for postgraduate studies focused on security issues. “There was a tacit division of labor: security for Russia, economics for China. But Russia is not doing its job anymore. It has shown that it is unable, or unwilling, to protect the region.”

Russia still has tremendous leverage in Central Asia. Its biggest foreign military base is in Tajikistan, and it has a small air base in Kyrgyzstan, a poor, remote country that remains heavily dependent on Russian energy supplies and remittances from more than a million Kyrgyz migrant workers in Russia.

Mr. Japarov, the Kyrgyz president, aware of his country's vulnerability, has stalled on signing the new agreement with the United States. Doing that would be perceived in Moscow as a "stab in the back and they would be right," he said.

"Russia is obviously focused on other things right now, not Central Asia, but the moment it wants to lay down the law, it just has to hint that it will make life difficult for migrant workers in Russia," said Peter Leonard, Central Asia editor for Eurasianet, a media outlet that reports on the region.

But the recent border war between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan unsettled longstanding assumptions about Russian power. It erupted just as Mr. Putin was in neighboring Uzbekistan for a summit meeting of a Chinese-sponsored regional grouping, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which was attended by President Xi Jinping of China, as well as leaders of India, Turkey, Azerbaijan and four Central Asian countries.

Overshadowed by the Chinese leader, Mr. Putin endured a series of humiliating protocol snafus that left him waiting awkwardly in front of the cameras as other leaders, including Mr. Japarov of Kyrgyzstan, showed up late to meet him.

"This was of course not deliberate," Mr. Japarov said. "No slight was intended."

But widely circulated videos of an uncomfortable-looking Mr. Putin; a public rebuke from the prime minister of India, who stated that "today's era is not of war"; and an acknowledgment from the Russian leader that China had "questions and concerns" over the war in Ukraine all reinforced an image of shrinking clout and diminished appeal.

"Putin is no longer the great invincible leader that everyone wants to meet," said Emil Dzhuraev, a researcher in Bishkek with Crossroads Central Asia, a research group. "He has lost his aura."

By contrast, Mr. Xi has become more assertive. On a visit to Kazakhstan last month, he pledged to "resolutely support Kazakhstan in the defense of its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity," a remark widely interpreted as a warning to Moscow not to try anything.

A few days later, after Tajik forces advanced, China issued a similar pledge with respect to Kyrgyzstan, horning in on Russia's longstanding role as the guardian of Central Asian borders.

China also delivered another affront during the summit meeting by signing an agreement with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan that fixed the route of a proposed new railway line to get Chinese exports to Europe by land without going through Russia.

The massive project, which is expected to cost more than \$4 billion and still faces immense obstacles, had long been on hold, largely because China already had rail links to Europe through Kazakhstan and Russia, and did not want to risk Moscow's wrath by building an alternative that would break its chokehold on land transport across Eurasia.

Mr. Japarov, a nationalist politician who has often spoken of the need to strengthen his country's sovereignty, said he had "not asked Russia for permission" to build the railway line "and had not been told not to." He added: "Even if they tell me not to, we will, God willing, still build it."

Mr. Japarov complained that when the border fighting erupted with Tajikistan, Russia's military alliance "did nothing at all," adding that the Russians are "taking care of so many problems of their own."

Some officials in Bishkek wonder if Russia winked at the military action by Tajikistan, a tightly controlled dictatorship ruled by the same leader since 1994, even longer than Mr. Putin has been in control of the Kremlin. Kyrgyzstan, by contrast, is considered the only Central Asian country with a modicum of real democracy and a relatively free press.

The view of Mr. Putin siding with Tajikistan — rather than being an unbiased umpire between two members of his military alliance — gained more ground this past week when the Kremlin declared that it was giving the veteran Tajik dictator, Emomali Rahmon, a prestigious state award for his contribution to “regional stability and security.”

Kyrgyzstan’s foreign ministry said the award, announced by Moscow “while the blood of innocent victims has not yet cooled on Kyrgyz soil,” had caused “bewilderment.”

In Batken, the southwestern region of Kyrgyzstan where the border fighting broke out, the rolling steppes, studded with rocky outcrops, sustain a jumble of rival ethnic groups — impoverished farmers and herders who, armed with farm implements, have for decades skirmished sporadically in what they called the “shovel wars.”

But last month this fight quickly became a real war, with shells even landing in the regional capital, Batken city, scores of miles from the disputed border.

Particularly gruesome is the scene in the village of Ak-Sai, where the cages of a large farm are now filled with thousands of dead chickens that apparently died from suffocation when their brick-and-mud coop was set on fire.

The Kyrgyz owner of the business, who stayed behind to guard his chickens, according to local officials, was shot in his office by marauding Tajiks. Feathers and bullet casings litter the ground outside.

“The perverse aspect of this is that both sides are members of the same military alliance of which Russia is in charge,” said Mr. Leonard, the Eurasianet editor. “The days when Russia dictated these countries’ military posture has clearly gone out the window.”

The head of the district administration, Jorobaev Imamalievich, said he was dismayed.

“Russia was silent. It is busy in Ukraine and is not paying attention,” he said. “It is just not here anymore.”

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HEADLINE	10/08 Bridge blast deals blow Russia war effort
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/08/world/europe/ukraine-crimea-bridge-explosion.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=World%20News
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — A fireball consumed two sections of the only bridge linking the occupied Crimean Peninsula to Russia on Saturday, disrupting the most important supply line for Russian troops fighting in southern Ukraine and dealing an embarrassing blow to the Kremlin, which is facing continued losses on the battlefield and mounting criticism at home.</p> <p>The blast and fire sent part of the 12-mile Kerch Strait Bridge tumbling into the sea and killed at least three people, according to the Russian authorities. A senior Ukrainian official corroborated Russian reports that Ukraine was behind the attack. The official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of a government ban on discussing the blast, added that Ukraine’s intelligence services had orchestrated the explosion, using a bomb loaded onto a truck being driven across the bridge.</p> <p>For President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, who presided over the bridge’s opening in 2018, the explosion was a highly personal affront, underscoring his failure to get a handle on a relentless series of Ukrainian attacks.</p>

The explosion is emblematic of a Russian military in disarray. Russian forces were unable to protect the bridge, despite its centrality to the war effort, its personal importance to Mr. Putin and its potent symbolism as the literal connection between Russia and Crimea.

Hours after the explosion, the Kremlin appointed Gen. Sergei Surovikin, yet another new commander, to oversee its forces in Ukraine. Previous leadership shake-ups have done little to right the military's floundering performance.

The full extent of the damage was not immediately clear. The bridge has sections for train and automobile traffic. By Saturday evening, the railroad section of the bridge had undergone repairs and a train with 15 cars had successfully crossed the span, according to a Russian state news agency, Tass. Car traffic had also resumed on the undamaged side of the bridge, the head of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, said in a post on Telegram.

Even so, Russian officials, military bloggers and politicians were already calling for revenge, with one saying that anything short of an "extremely harsh" response would show weakness.

Any serious impediment to traffic on the bridge could have a profound effect on Russia's ability to wage war in southern Ukraine, where Ukrainian forces have been fighting an increasingly effective counteroffensive. The bridge is the primary military supply route linking Russia with the Crimean Peninsula. Without it, analysts said, the Russian military will be severely limited in its ability to bring fuel, equipment and ammunition to Russian units fighting in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, two of the four Ukrainian provinces that Mr. Putin [announced Russia had annexed](#) on Sept. 30.

Russia's National Anti-Terrorism Committee said in a statement that a truck had exploded on the automobile side of the bridge, igniting seven fuel cisterns being pulled by a train on a parallel rail line headed in the direction of Crimea.

It was unclear if the driver of the truck, who died in the blast, was aware there were explosives inside. In video captured by a surveillance camera on the bridge, a huge fireball is seen, seeming to consume several vehicles. A small sedan and a tractor-trailer truck driving side by side appear at the epicenter of the blast. The explosion caused two sections of the bridge to partly collapse.

For the Ukrainians, the explosion "is not necessarily a decisive victory, but the balance of war often turns on an accumulation of lesser victories," said Ben Barry, a senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a research group based in London. "It is another ratchet of the pressure on President Putin."

While there were no official claims of responsibility, Ukrainian officials, who in the past have said the bridge would be a legitimate target for a strike, indicated that the explosion was no accident and made no secret of their satisfaction.

"Crimea, the bridge, the beginning," Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukraine's president, wrote in a Twitter post on Saturday. "Everything illegal, must be destroyed. Everything stolen returned to Ukraine. All Russian occupiers expelled."

Ukraine's domestic intelligence agency, the Security Service of Ukraine, known by its Ukrainian acronym S.B.U., issued a statement rephrasing a stanza of a poem by Ukraine's national poet, Taras Shevchenko. "Dawn, the bridge is burning beautifully," the agency posted on Twitter. "A nightingale in Crimea meets the S.B.U."

President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine seemed to allude to the attack when he noted in his nightly address that Saturday "was a good and mostly sunny day" in Ukrainian territory. "Unfortunately, it was cloudy in Crimea," he said.

The Kremlin's spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, referred to the episode as an "emergency" in a statement on Saturday. He said that Mr. Putin, who had celebrated his 70th birthday on Friday, had been briefed.

"The president directed the prime minister to form a government commission to find out the causes of the incident and eliminate the consequences as soon as possible," Mr. Peskov said, according to Russian state media.

Occupation officials in Crimea left little doubt about who they thought was responsible.

"Ukrainian vandals were able to reach the Crimean bridge with their bloody hands," said Vladimir Konstantinov, the head of Crimea's Kremlin-installed Parliament.

In recent weeks, military traffic heading across the bridge into Crimea has increased, as Russia has raced tanks and artillery equipment to the front lines in the Kherson region, a fertile slice of southern Ukraine that the Kremlin's forces occupied in the first weeks of the war.

Ukrainian forces have stepped up their counteroffensive in the region, recapturing significant amounts of land in an effort to drive Russian forces east across the Dnipro River and liberate the city of Kherson, the only regional Ukrainian capital that Russian forces control.

Without the Kerch Strait Bridge, particularly the railroad section, the Kremlin would have few good options for supplying these troops with fuel and military equipment from their stocks in Russia, analysts said. Ferrying supplies by ship or plane to Crimea would be much more cumbersome, experts said. And a possible alternative overland supply route using southern Ukrainian territory seized by Russian forces would be vulnerable to Ukrainian attack and require the use of trucks, as there are no functioning rail lines.

"Essentially all heavy military traffic passed through the bridge, tanks, artillery and so on," said Konrad Muzyka, a military analyst with Roshan Consulting.

In a statement, Russia's defense ministry said troops in southern Ukraine would be supplied "fully and without interruption" by ground and sea, though it did not explain how this might be accomplished.

Ukraine's monthlong blitz to retake territory from retreating Russian forces in the northeast of the country continued on Saturday, and Russia stepped up its bombardments of civilian infrastructure from the air.

Early on Saturday Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine was rocked by explosions. Photos of an explosion showed a red fireball lighting up the night sky, enveloped by a billowing cloud of dark smoke. Buildings, including a medical institution, were on fire, Kharkiv's mayor, Igor Terekhov, wrote on Telegram. It was not immediately known whether there were deaths or injuries.

Almost at the same time, Russian shelling also damaged the last line connecting the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant to Ukrainian energy systems, cutting it off from the power grid that is used to cool its reactors. The plant, Europe's largest, has been disconnected from external power at least twice before, forcing it to rely on diesel generators to power safety equipment.

Herman Galushchenko, Ukraine's energy minister, said in a Facebook post on Saturday that there was only enough diesel fuel to operate the plant for about 10 days, adding that the professionalism of Ukrainian nuclear workers was now the only "safeguard against a possible nuclear accident."

Whether or not Ukraine takes responsibility for the bridge blast, the episode is redolent of other attacks carried out by Ukrainian forces against targets that were highly symbolic and showcased Ukraine's military ingenuity in the face of a much stronger, more heavily armed Russian military.

In April, two Ukrainian-made Neptune cruise missiles, a weapon system that had never before been used in battle, slammed into the hull of the Moskva, the flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet. The strike set off a

series of explosions that eventually caused the cruiser to sink, killing an unknown number of sailors, including possibly the ship's captain.

While the attack on the Moskva stunned Russia's military establishment, it was a series of explosions over the summer at military targets in Crimea that truly underscored Ukraine's ability to strike at Russia's pride as well as its army. The attacks, including on the critical Saki Air Base, shattered the illusion that Crimea, the crown jewel of Mr. Putin's years of conquest in Ukraine, would be spared violence during the war.

Seized by Mr. Putin's forces in 2014 and illegally incorporated into Russia shortly after, Crimea has steadily transformed from a quiet summer resort destination in southern Ukraine into a beachhead of military operations which, before the war, had become a symbol of Russia's imperial resurgence.

The bridge itself is an engineering marvel that cost an estimated \$7.5 billion and for the first time created a physical link between the Russian Federation and Crimea, which for centuries was part of the Russian Empire before being given by the Soviet government to Ukraine in the 1950s, in what was then a largely ceremonial gesture.

The bridge allowed easier access to Crimea not only for Russian tourists, but also for Russia's military, which transported weapons and equipment into the peninsula in the years before February's invasion.

It was from Crimea that Russian forces attacked southern Ukraine, quickly gobbling up large swaths of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions in the Kremlin's most successful operation in the war to date.

But, as the attack on the bridge underscored, that success seems increasingly imperiled.

After the explosion, Russian officials, along with the country's increasingly bellicose military bloggers, did not wait for confirmation that Ukraine was responsible, calling for a swift and devastating response.

"If this time, we do not respond or do not respond just so, it will show definitively that we are weak," said Sergei Mironov, the leader of a pro-Kremlin political party. "This extreme audacity requires an extremely harsh response."

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HEADLINE	10/09 Crimea bridge strategic, symbolic value
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/09/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#crimea-kerch-strait-bridge-explosion-explainer
GIST	<p>The 12-mile Kerch Strait Bridge linking the Crimean Peninsula to Russia, which was badly damaged by an explosion on Saturday, is not just the primary supply route for Moscow's forces fighting in southern Ukraine. It is also deeply symbolic for President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, a pillar of his disputed claim to the Crimean Peninsula since the completion of the twin road spans in 2018.</p> <p>Mr. Putin presided over the bridge's opening, personally driving a truck across what is a physical link between Russia and Crimea — land that Mr. Putin seized from Ukraine in 2014 and annexed to international outcry.</p> <p>Ukrainians loathe the bridge, whose symbolism and strategic importance for resupply has long made it a potential target. Over the summer, the Ukrainian military posted a taunting image on Twitter threatening to strike it with American-provided guided rockets. The video showed the launch vehicle, a High Mobility Artillery Rocket system, floating on a pink inflatable pool raft in the strait, and the bridge in the background.</p> <p>And at one point over the summer, it appeared to have been targeted: Russian officials said that a drone had triggered air defense systems. The Ukrainian government had no official comment at the time.</p>

Moscow had stepped up countermeasures to defend the structure, deploying a target ship — [replete with an array of radar reflectors](#) — to protect the bridge from attack and running drills to cover the bridge with a smoke screen.

As well as military value, the structure holds deep symbolic significance for the Kremlin. After illegally annexing Crimea in 2014, Moscow vowed to physically connect the peninsula to Russia.

For a century, talks of building a bridge across the strait — which runs between two mountain ranges, creating a fierce wind tunnel — had failed to result in action. But Mr. Putin put his weight behind the project, despite that and other engineering challenges, which include a seabed covered with some 250 feet of fine silt deposited by the alluvial flow from various rivers.

During World War II, an ice floe unleashed during the spring thaw toppled a German military bridge that had been hastily constructed across the waters to aid the Nazi war effort.

In 2018, when the new bridge was opened, Mr. Putin hailed it as a “remarkable” achievement that, he said, referring to a major city on the peninsula, “makes Crimea and legendary Sevastopol even stronger, and all of us are even closer to each other.”

But after [explosions at the Saki airfield](#) on Crimea in August, the bridge served a different purpose: It was a quick escape route as the war came to the peninsula, with more than 38,000 cars crossing in one day, the most recorded since Mr. Putin declared it open.

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HEADLINE	10/09 Intense: Russia missiles hit Kharkiv
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/09/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#russia-strikes-kharkiv-ukraine
GIST	<p>KHARKIV, Ukraine — Four Russian missiles struck the city center of Kharkiv just after midnight on Saturday morning in one of the most intense attacks in weeks, targeting two building complexes used by the Ukrainian military.</p> <p>One 45-year-old man was hospitalized with shrapnel wounds, the head of the Kharkiv regional military administration, Oleh Syniehubov, said on Telegram.</p> <p>Three of the missiles landed in building courtyards, and a fourth landed in a park across the street. One missile landed on the grounds of the city library, an elegant pale yellow stucco building also used by the Institute of Agriculture, where Ukrainian soldiers had been using an annex in recent months.</p> <p>On Saturday, uniformed soldiers examined a crater beside a mangled green bus. Two of the missiles had struck another building complex adjacent to the library, severely damaging part of a three-story building and nearby shops. Soldiers in civilian clothes barred entrance to the courtyard of the complex as police officials arrived to inspect the damage. The building seems to have been an ammunition depot, according to residents who posted videos of the aftermath of the strikes on social media.</p> <p>A security guard who lived nearby said he heard explosions for about an hour after the strikes. Videos posted on Telegram channels by city residents captured flames burning and sounds of explosions.</p> <p>On the yard of the second complex, one missile had gouged a crater almost 10 meters wide. People were carrying green boxes out of a building in another part of the yard. The buildings were also hit in a series of strikes in the summer.</p> <p>The missiles were from S-300 air defense systems, a police investigator at the scene said, as he collected debris from the crater in the park.</p>

	The Russian army has used S-300 missiles increasingly in the last few months to attack both military and civilian targets across Ukraine, which has mounted a concerted counteroffensive against Russian positions in eastern and southern fronts.
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HEADLINE	10/09 Russia hard-liners demand swift revenge
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/09/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#calls-for-russian-revenge-start-within-hours-of-blast-on-crimea-bridge
GIST	<p>Within hours of a blast that damaged the sole bridge linking Crimea with Russia early Saturday, hard-line military bloggers and Russian officials were calling for a swift and strong response from Moscow.</p> <p>One high-level politician said that anything less than an “extremely harsh” response would show weakness from the Kremlin, which is facing continued losses on the battlefield and mounting criticism at home.</p> <p>For President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, who presided over the bridge’s opening in 2018, the explosion seemed to be a highly personal affront, underscoring his failure to get a handle on a relentless series of Ukrainian attacks.</p> <p>Some news media commentators demanded that Russia destroy Ukraine’s electricity infrastructure and the transportation systems used to import Western armaments.</p> <p>Evgeny Poddubny, a war correspondent for the state RT outlet, said that nobody in the Ukrainian leadership seemed to fear Russia anymore.</p> <p>“The enemy has stopped being afraid, and this circumstance needs to be corrected promptly,” he wrote in RT’s Telegram channel. “Commanders of formations, heads of intelligence agencies, politicians of the Kyiv criminal regime sleep peacefully, wake up without a headache and in a good mood, without a sense of inevitability of punishment for crimes committed.”</p> <p>Aleksandr Kots, a war correspondent for the Russian tabloid Komsomolskaya Pravda, wrote on Telegram that disabling the bridge bodes ill for Moscow’s already troubled efforts to hold onto territory in the Kherson region of southern Ukraine — and most likely foreshadowed a future attack on Crimea itself.</p> <p>He described the “consistency” that Ukraine was showing in the war as “enviable” and called for Russia to “hammer Ukraine into the 18th century, without meaningless reflection on how this will affect the civilian population.”</p> <p>While there were no official claims of responsibility, Ukrainian officials, who in the past have said the bridge would be a legitimate target for a strike, indicated that the explosion was no accident and made no secret of their satisfaction.</p> <p>“Crimea, the bridge, the beginning,” Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukraine’s president, wrote in a Twitter post on Saturday. “Everything illegal, must be destroyed. Everything stolen returned to Ukraine. All Russian occupiers expelled.”</p> <p>The explosion is emblematic of a Russian military in disarray. Russian forces were unable to protect the road and rail crossing despite its centrality to the war effort, its personal importance to Mr. Putin and its potent symbolism as the literal connection between Russia and Crimea.</p> <p>For Russia, the rail crossing “has played a key role in moving heavy military vehicles to the southern front during the invasion,” the British defense intelligence agency wrote in its daily assessment on Sunday. It added that although the extent of the damage to the rail line was uncertain, “any serious disruption to its capacity will highly likely have a significant impact on Russia’s already strained ability to sustain its forces in southern Ukraine.”</p>

	<p>Two of the four lanes of roadway “have collapsed in several places” over an approximately 250-meter stretch, the report said.</p> <p>Hours after the explosion, the Kremlin appointed Gen. Sergei Surovikin, yet another new commander, to oversee its forces in Ukraine. Previous leadership shake-ups have done little to right the military’s floundering performance.</p> <p>General Surovikin, 55, has long had a reputation for corruption and brutality, military analysts said.</p> <p>“He is known as a pretty ruthless commander who is short with subordinates and is known for his temper,” said Michael Kofman, the director of Russia studies at C.N.A., a defense research institute based in Virginia.</p> <p>His appointment was quickly praised by some of the biggest supporters of the war, including Yevgeny Prigozhin, the founder of the Wagner mercenary group that was deployed heavily in Syria. He made a rare public endorsement of the general, calling him “legendary.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/08 Explosion: bridge linking Crimea to Russia
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/10/08/ukraine-3-dead-explosion-on-bridge-linking-occupied-Crimea/2271665231008/
GIST	<p>Oct. 8 (UPI) -- Three people died in a huge explosion that severely damaged a strategic bridge linking Russia and the occupied Crimean peninsula, Russian authorities said Saturday.</p> <p>Two spans supporting the roadbed of one lane of the bridge collapsed when a truck exploded on the bridge early Saturday morning, Russia's National Anti-Terrorism Committee told the Interfax news agency.</p> <p>The explosion caused fuel tankers on a passing freight train to catch fire, igniting a massive blaze that necessitated the halting of automobile traffic across the key bridge, which was opened in 2018 and is seen by Kyiv as a symbol of Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula.</p> <p>The span links the Russian region of Krasnodar to the city of Kerch in Crimea.</p> <p>Social media images showed sections of the bridge's roadbed submerged in water.</p> <p>The three people who died are thought to be passengers of a car that was next to the truck when it exploded, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation said in a statement.</p> <p>The bodies of two of the victims, a man and a woman, have been recovered from the waters of the Kerch Strait and their identities are being established.</p> <p>A criminal case has been opened in the incident, the ICR said.</p> <p>Ukraine did not claim responsibility for the bridge explosion, but Mykhailo Podolyak, a top adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, wrote in a Twitter post the Crimea bridge explosion is "the beginning.</p> <p>"Everything illegal must be destroyed, everything stolen must be returned to Ukraine, everything occupied by Russia must be expelled," he wrote.</p> <p>The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense compared the bridge explosion to the sinking of the Moskva missile cruiser in April.</p> <p>"The guided missile cruiser Moskva and the Kerch Bridge -- two notorious symbols of Russian power in Ukrainian Crimea -- have gone down," defense officials wrote in a tweet. "What's next in line, Russkies?"</p>

	<p>The Kerch Bridge is the longest in Europe and was hailed at its opening four years ago by Russian President Vladimir Putin as a symbol of what he called the "restoration of historical justice" represented by the March 2014 annexation of Crimea.</p> <p>Putin ordered the bridge to be built one month after the annexation, which followed the ouster of pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/08 WA fire season lightest in decade
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/washington-states-fire-season-lightest-decade/3QENFWCLBBE6XLYD6HRS3KUAV4/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Washington state this year has had the fewest square miles burned in a decade following the second- and third-worst fire seasons on record in 2020 and 2021.</p> <p>State Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz announced Friday that about 219 square miles (567 square kilometers) burned in 2022 wildfires, The Seattle Times reported.</p> <p>That’s compared to nearly 781 square miles (2,023 square kilometers) in 2021 and 1,316 square miles (3,408 square kilometers) burned in 2020.</p> <p>2015 was the state’s worst fire season in recorded history, when more than 1,562 square miles (4,045 square kilometers) burned.</p> <p>Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz celebrated the moderate fire season, saying a combination of Department of Natural Resources equipment, aerial firefighting assets, personnel, partnerships with other agencies, as well as a rainy spring that delayed the start of this year’s fire season contributed to the success.</p> <p>Since taking office in 2017, Franz has touted the benefits of controlled burns, and “treating” forests by thinning brush, trimming branches and removing dying trees.</p> <p>Department of Natural Resources officials since 2017 have tracked over 625 square miles (1,619 square kilometers) of completed treatments, and about 109 square miles (282 square kilometers) of prescribed burns in Central and Eastern Washington.</p> <p>On Friday, Franz said crews this year were able to keep more than 94% of fires to 10 acres or less.</p> <p>Franz also stressed that the Bolt Creek fire still burning northeast of Seattle was a reminder that fire “doesn’t see boundaries.”</p> <p>“As climate change and other factors have worsened the length and impact of fire seasons, turning them instead into fire years, wildfire is no longer an eastside issue – it’s a statewide one,” she said.</p> <p>The Bolt Creek fire started Sept. 10 just north of Skykomish along U.S. Highway 2. As of Friday afternoon, the fire had torched about 20 square miles (52 square kilometers) and was 36% contained.</p> <p>The fire is burning into the Wild Sky Wilderness and has prompted several closures of the highway. The exact origin and cause are still under investigation, but the Western Washington Incident Management Team confirmed the blaze was human-caused.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 NKorea launches 2 missiles toward sea
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SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/united-states-south-korea-north-joint-chiefs-of-staff-40529caee17dcea271412721c320770f
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters on Sunday, the latest of a recent barrage of weapons tests, a day after it warned the redeployment of a U.S. aircraft carrier near the Korean Peninsula was inflaming regional tensions.</p> <p>South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement that it detected two missile launches Sunday between 1:48 a.m. and 1:58 a.m. from the North's eastern coastal city of Munchon. It added that South Korea's military has boosted its surveillance posture and maintains a readiness in close coordination with the United States.</p> <p>Japanese Vice Defense Minister Toshiro Ino also confirmed the launches, saying Pyongyang's testing activities are "absolutely unacceptable" as they threaten regional and international peace and security.</p> <p>Ino said the weapons could be submarine-launched ballistic missiles. "We are continuing to analyze details of the missiles, including a possibility that they might have been launched from the sea," Ino said.</p> <p>North Korea's pursuit of an ability to fire missiles from a submarine would constitute an alarming development for its rivals because it's harder to detect such launches in advance. North Korea was believed to have last tested a missile launch from a submarine in May.</p> <p>The South Korean and Japanese militaries assessed that the missiles flew about 350 kilometers (217 miles) and reached maximum altitudes of 90 to 100 kilometers (56 to 60 miles) before falling into the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.</p> <p>Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida separately instructed officials to gather and analyze all information they could and expedite any updates about the tests to the public. His office said it also was seeking to ensure the safety of all aircraft and ships in waters around Japan while preparing for any contingencies.</p> <p>South Korea's presidential office said National Security Director Kim Sung-han called an emergency security meeting over the launches where members reviewed the South's defense preparedness and discussed ways to strengthen cooperation with the United States and Japan to counter the growing North Korean threats.</p> <p>Seoul warned that Pyongyang's consecutive provocations will deepen its international isolation and increase the "instability of the regime" by worsening its economy and people's livelihoods.</p> <p>The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement that the launches didn't pose any immediate threat to U.S. personnel or territory, or to its allies. But it said the launches highlight "the destabilizing impact" of North Korea's unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs. It said U.S. commitments to the defense of South Korea and Japan remain "ironclad."</p> <p>The launch, the North's seventh round of weapons tests in two weeks, came hours after the United States and South Korea wrapped up two days of naval drills off the Korean Peninsula's east coast.</p> <p>The drills involved the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan and its battle group, which returned to the area after North Korea fired a powerful missile over Japan last week to protest the carrier group's previous training with South Korea.</p> <p>On Saturday, North Korea's Defense Ministry warned that the Reagan's redeployment was causing a "considerably huge negative splash" in regional security. The ministry called its recent missile tests a "righteous reaction" to intimidating military drills between South Korea and the United States.</p> <p>North Korea regards U.S.-South Korean military exercises as an invasion rehearsal and is especially sensitive if such drills involve U.S. strategic assets such as an aircraft carrier. North Korea has argued it</p>

was forced to pursue a nuclear weapons program to cope with U.S. nuclear threats. U.S. and South Korean officials have repeatedly said they have no intentions of attacking the North.

North Korea has launched more than 40 ballistic and cruise missiles in over 20 different events this year, exploiting a division in the U.N. Security Council deepened over Russia's war on Ukraine as a window to speed up arms development.

The record number of tests included last week's launch of a nuclear-capable missile that flew over Japan for the first time in five years. It was estimated to have traveled about 4,500-4,600 kilometers (2,800-2,860 miles), a distance sufficient to reach the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam and beyond.

South Korean officials say Pyongyang may up the ante soon by conducting an intercontinental ballistic missile or a nuclear test explosion, following a traditional pattern of manufacturing diplomatic crises with weapons tests and threats before offering negotiations aimed at extracting concessions. There are also concerns about provocations along the Koreas' land and sea borders.

Sunday's launches came on the eve of the 77th anniversary of the foundation of the North Korean ruling Workers' Party.

Earlier this year, North Korea tested other nuclear-capable ballistic missiles that place the U.S. mainland, South Korea and Japan within striking distance.

North Korea's testing spree indicates its leader, Kim Jong Un, has no intention of resuming diplomacy with the U.S. and wants to focus on expanding his weapons arsenal. But some experts say Kim would eventually aim to use his advanced nuclear program to wrest greater outside concessions, such as the recognition of North Korea as a legitimate nuclear state, which Kim thinks is essential in getting crippling U.N. sanctions lifted.

South Korean officials recently said North Korea was also prepared to test a new liquid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missile and a submarine-launched ballistic missile while maintaining readiness to perform its first underground nuclear test since 2017.

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HEADLINE	10/08 Plight Hmong farmers highlights disparities
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/plight-of-was-hmong-farmers-underscores-disparities-in-us-agriculture/
GIST	<p>Hmong flower farmers took a big hit when Puget Sound farmers markets closed at the outset of the pandemic, leaving the farmers with a wealth of tulips, dahlias and daffodils — and nowhere to sell them.</p> <p>One farmer, May Yang, took a 70% drop in sales that year, barely keeping her family business afloat. But she got by with help from a Hmong cultural organization that pooled resources to support farmers and found ways to put their flowers in front of customers.</p> <p>Now, two years later, Yang's livelihood is again being upended: After a miscommunication between her landlord and a fellow farmer, she found out in June that she has to vacate her rented Snohomish farmland by March. The timeline is short notice for her, as her business depends on the annual planting seasons of more than 25 flower varieties she grows on about 3 acres of farmland.</p> <p>"It's very devastating," Yang said. "Eighty percent of my income depends on the farm."</p> <p>To advocates, Yang's situation is indicative of an annual trend: Hmong farmers get displaced for one reason or another, hustling to find farmland so they can make it to next spring with flowers to sell. Yang's plight also speaks to the power dynamic between landowners and their farmland tenants, who rarely negotiate formal lease contracts, as well as the longstanding disparity in who owns farmland in the first place.</p>

The Hmong Association of Washington, which helped Yang and other farmers keep their businesses alive early in the pandemic, is now trying to help her and a handful of peers find stable, fertile land where they can transplant their flowers — avoiding the nightmare scenario of losing an entire year of sales.

“Many of them don’t have any other income. They have to depend on making money from March all the way to October,” said Cynthia Yongvang, the organization’s executive director. “They really need to have the land at the right time.”

Land laws and handshake agreements

The [federal government distributed more than 240 million acres of land](#) to American citizens after the Civil War. But white people [got nearly all of that land](#), as [Jim Crow laws discriminated against Black people](#) and most other [nonwhite people were barred from U.S. citizenship](#).

Those racist land redistribution laws still have an impact today: Between 2012 and 2014, white people owned 98% of farmland and operated 94% of all U.S. farmland, according to a [2018 Portland State University study](#).

Portland State researchers also concluded that farmers of color — specifically Black, Hispanic, Asian, Indigenous and Hawaiian people — “were more likely to be tenants rather than owners, owned less land, and generated less farm-related wealth per person than their White counterparts.”

That finding rings true for Hmong farmers in Washington. Not only are they more likely to rent farmland, rather than own it, but they rely almost entirely on farm income to support their families. Many live under the poverty line, making less than \$50,000 a year, according to a [2010 Washington State University study](#).

Keeping their flower farm businesses afloat comes down to having an amenable landlord, said Yongvang, who’s seeking to help seven farmers who will soon lose their farmland, including Yang and four others on the Snohomish property.

This spring, Yongvang started the Washington Hmong Farmers Cooperative, a nonprofit helping members seeking to buy farmland and secure their long-term business prospects instead of having to rely on leases that could end on short notice.

She’s learned how beholden the farmers can be to their landlords. If a farmer wants to install a greenhouse or shed, for example, landlord approval comes first. And building structures to expand their businesses can prove difficult for those who may need to move their operations months or years later.

“Can you imagine building a greenhouse and then now you have to tear it down after all the investment you put into building it?” Yongvang said.

Yang said it won’t be difficult to move her tractor to new farmland — if she’s able to find any — but she knows there’s no moving her greenhouse and shed once she takes them down.

“I just feel sad because I put a lot of my time into building that greenhouse,” Yang said. “It’s going to take time to take it down again. I feel like my money is going to waste.”

Yang’s landlord told a head member of her group of five farmers in summer 2020 that they needed to leave by March 2023. Yang said that information never got to her, however, and she found out in June, nearly two years later.

Yang doesn’t think her landlord, Fred Zylstra, did her wrong, and she hopes he’ll let her stay longer. Zylstra said he may be able to offer a couple more weeks, but he needs the farmland to grow feed for his cattle next spring.

“I felt like I did my part,” Zylstra said. “I notified the person I thought would get the word out to the entire family. Now it’s creating a bad situation for them. I hate to see that for anyone.”

At the heart of Yang’s situation is the fact that there was never any formal lease contract between her, the other farmers and Zylstra. That’s common for Hmong farmers, said Bee Cha, who for 16 years has connected farmers with resources and helped them find land.

Every year, Cha helps Hmong farmers relocate, either because landlords don’t want to renew their leases or because of land issues like improper irrigation, bad soil or flooding.

In the worst cases, Cha said, landlords negotiate one- or two-year handshake deals with the farmers. And without formal paperwork, Cha said landlords, who are almost always white, can simply remove tenants if they want to repurpose their land.

“The tenants always get the short end of the stick because you have a lot to lose,” Cha said.

The language barrier between Hmong farmers and white landowners also doesn’t help, and farmers feel pressure to simply agree with whatever their landlord wants, especially when their main source of income depends on everything going well on the farm, Cha said.

“You don’t speak the language and you don’t know how contractual things work,” he said. “The landlords are mostly white and are perceived as powerful landowners, and they have legal and political connections.”

In other words: If a landlord doesn’t bring up a formal lease, Hmong farmers aren’t going to ask about obtaining one.

A narrow path to farmland ownership

The best way to overcome the challenges with renting farmland is to simply buy your own plot.

But for many Hmong farmers, it’s not that easy.

Chayeng Xiong, a Hmong farmer renting two acres in Carnation, considers himself lucky: His landlord is friendly, and he hasn’t had any recent problems renting land. But since taking over his parents’ flower business more than five years ago, he said he wants the autonomy to make his own decisions without needing landlord approval.

Xiong knows state or federal help is out there, but he said he isn’t sure where to turn for information and resources — and isn’t familiar with how to navigate the required paperwork.

The prospect of having to move one day, yanking out his flower bulbs and replanting them somewhere else, adds pressure for Xiong.

“I would hate to dig every one of those up and move to another place,” Xiong said.

But cracking into the staggeringly white sphere of farmland ownership has proved difficult for farmers of color, especially Hmong farmers like Xiong who are unfamiliar with federal assistance and have little knowledge of the bureaucratic process and its obstacles.

Friendly Vang-Johnson, a community organizer and daughter of Hmong farmers, learned that firsthand when she tried to buy farmland in 2021. She, like most other people of color, needed a loan to buy 5 acres of land in Redmond, but she hit a roadblock while trying to get federal support.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency offers loans at lower interest rates than banks but requires dense paperwork before beginning an approval process that could take up to two months.

To get approved, loan applicants also need to show the USDA a signed purchase agreement with a landowner committing to sell to them and no one else — a big commitment when a buyer’s loan application is weeks or months from approval.

Vang-Johnson said it’s hard to see why a white landowner would go through that lengthy and uncertain process with someone they don’t already know well, like a family member, close friend or rural community member — all of whom are also likely to be white.

She said it would also be unlikely for a white landowner to enter that process with a Hmong farmer if other interested parties are willing to make more attractive offers, such as paying in cash.

“They have to basically crack into a system that’s based on whiteness,” Vang-Johnson said. “It requires the benevolence of a white person.”

She proposed a simple first step toward fixing the problem: The USDA should preapprove loan applications.

“If the USDA could preapprove people, that would just put us on better footing so that when we approach a seller, we can say we’ve already gone through the USDA programs, we are vetted, we are serious buyers,” Vang-Johnson said.

Yang, the farmer in Snohomish, would ideally like to buy her own land. But right now, she’s focused on making it to next spring with flowers to sell.

To do that, Yang would need to transplant her flowers into new farmland before the end of October, putting some of her varieties, like her tulips, on track to bloom as expected in the spring.

The same can’t be said for her peonies, whose three-year growing cycle would be disrupted by a move this month or in the spring. Either way, Yang said she’ll suffer a significant loss in sales.

“I just don’t want to think too much,” Yang said. “It’s too stressful for me right now.”

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HEADLINE	10/08 Covid booster rates lag despite messaging
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/new-covid-booster-rates-lag-in-wa-despite-urgent-public-health-messages/
GIST	<p>Washington’s rates for the newly designed COVID-19 booster are lagging, in line with similarly slow demand for the updated shots nationwide despite urgent public health messaging.</p> <p>The bivalent booster — which protects against severe illness from both the original virus strain, as well as omicron and its contagious subvariants — was authorized near the end of August and reached pharmacies and health care providers by early September. As of early October, though, rates were much lower than public health officials would like.</p> <p>Everyone ages 12 and older who has completed their primary COVID vaccine series (the first two doses of Moderna, Pfizer or Novavax, or one dose of Johnson & Johnson) is eligible for the updated booster. It’s safe to mix and match vaccine brands, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found.</p> <p>The Washington State Department of Health has yet to make statewide rates for updated boosters public, but in King County, only about 11.3% of eligible residents have gotten a new booster as of this week, compared with about 55.5% who received the original booster.</p> <p>“Overall, King County residents have led the country with some of the highest rates of COVID-19 primary series vaccination rates nationwide,” Public Health – Seattle & King County spokesperson Kate Cole</p>

wrote in an email. “But, right now, we have major gaps in updated (bivalent) booster coverage, even among older adults.”

About 40% of U.S. adults, or about 105 million, have received their first booster shot initially offered a year ago, according to federal data. Early reports show that just over 11 million Americans, or about 4% of those eligible, have received the new bivalent boosters. A third of adults say they eventually plan to get those shots, The Washington Post reported.

According to a recent Kaiser Family Foundation report, nearly half of American adults had heard little or nothing about the new boosters, The New York Times reported. So far, those 65 and older have reported the highest booster rates and understanding of the new shots, though confusion over eligibility was rather widespread, according to the newspaper.

“The single most important step we can take to protect ourselves and our community is to get vaccinated,” King County health officer Dr. Jeff Duchin said in a news briefing last month. “And if you are not boosted and you’re eligible, get an updated booster.”

In Seattle, it’s unclear if lower rates are primarily due to unawareness of the new boosters, decreased concern around COVID or difficulty finding appointments, but all of those factors likely play a role.

Kim Jones, 54, of West Seattle, has been eager to get her bivalent booster sooner rather than later so she’ll be protected in time for a mid-November charity bowling event she and her husband organize. She started by clicking onto the state’s online vaccine locator tool, but quickly ran into a few obstacles.

“They have good lists of places that might have the vaccine, but when you click through, it’s apparent that they aren’t linked to actual availability,” Jones wrote in a message to The Seattle Times. “The part that is frustrating is that there is STILL not a great way to check availability in a central website. You have to click through to various providers and click through several questions before they will show you what appointments they do (or in most cases do NOT) have.”

Earlier this week, Kaiser Permanente’s Washington vaccine locator led to a broken website. It’s back up, but Jones couldn’t find any appointments in her neighborhood. As of Friday afternoon, she still hadn’t secured one, but said she’d try again Monday.

Many have reported attempts to secure week-of appointments are often unsuccessful, and state health officials are asking residents to be patient.

Bartell Drugs is booking appointments about three weeks out. Most appointments at Walgreens and other pharmacies are also available about a week out.

At UW Medicine, people are asked to call a vaccine appointment hotline to join a waitlist. UW Medicine spokesperson Susan Gregg said Friday that appointments should be scheduled within a few days of calling.

In the meantime, King County is also hosting several community vaccination events in Auburn, Kent and a handful of Seattle neighborhoods over the next two weeks. On Saturday, vaccination events will be held at the White River Buddhist Temple in Auburn, 3625 Auburn Way N., from 8 a.m. to noon; at the New Beginnings Christian Fellowship in Kent, 19300 108th Ave. S.E., from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; and at Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute in Seattle, 104 17th Ave. S., from 1 to 5 p.m.

When the U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted emergency use authorization to the bivalent booster, the agency also removed authorization for the prior monovalent booster, meaning anyone who makes an appointment for a COVID booster will receive the newer shot.

Experts say the shot is most effective about a month after getting it, so those who plan to travel for Thanksgiving are encouraged to get their booster by the end of October at the latest.

If a large number of people don't stay up-to-date on their COVID vaccines, particularly those at increased risk of developing serious infections, public health agencies are worried the fall and winter could see another uptick in hospitalizations and deaths, as well as new long COVID cases and added strain on the region's hospital systems, Cole said.

"Getting an updated booster is an important step in improving our ability to limit the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on our lives, on our community including our schools, and on our economy," Cole said. "COVID-19 is not disappearing; it's changing and remains unpredictable."

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HEADLINE	10/08 Slipping toward dark winter losing daylight
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/weather-news/article266979046.html
GIST	<p>Remember waking at the start of October and being able to throw open your curtains to a ray of sunshine as early as 7 a.m.? Or how about when you get home from a busy day and enjoyed the outside sun until as late as 6:45 p.m.?</p> <p>Hold on to those memories. By the end of October, that's all they're going to be.</p> <p>As the days tick on from the autumnal equinox, when the sun sits directly above the equator, the days become shorter than the nights. The angle of the Earth in relation to the sun means the Northern Hemisphere sees less daylight as we slip toward the winter.</p> <p>October is the month with the most drastic loss of daylight and dipping temperatures, according to Carly Kovacik with the National Weather Service in Seattle.</p> <p>But just how fast are we losing sunlight? Probably more quickly than you imagine.</p> <p>OCTOBER: THE MOST DRAMATIC MONTH OF FALL</p> <p>October witnesses the fastest decrease in daylight of any other month as we move past the autumnal equinox, which was on Sept. 22.</p> <p>As the sun crosses the equator southward, it takes slightly longer to rise and slightly quicker to set each day as the axial tilt points the Northern Hemisphere away from the sun's rays. The transition is fastest during October because directly after the equinox, the tilt causes the sunlight that hits a region to decrease more rapidly than in the dead of winter.</p> <p>The sun is positioned at one end of the spectrum during the summer and winter solstices, when the days are either longest or shortest, respectively, and therefore the change in daylight isn't as drastic.</p> <p>"As you start to get over and towards the equinoxes it can change a bit, because we're not pointed directly away or towards the sun at that point," Kovacik told McClatchy News. "So there's a lot of change going on."</p> <p>SO HOW MUCH DAYLIGHT DO WE LOSE PER DAY?</p> <p>On Oct. 1 in Washington, the sun rose at approximately 7:08 a.m. and set at 6:48 p.m., for a total of 11 hours and 40 minutes of daylight.</p> <p>On Oct. 31, the sun will rise around 7:51 a.m. and set at 5:54 p.m., totaling just 10 hours and 2 minutes of daylight, nearly a 90-minute difference.</p> <p>On average, Washington loses around 3 minutes of daylight per day in October. Compared to December, when the winter solstice occurs, the difference in daylight from the start of the month to the end is approximately 12 minutes.</p>

	<p>The dramatic decrease in daylight in October also coincides with a quick decrease in temperature, Kovacic said.</p> <p>“As we start to get into the fall, the nights are growing longer. So don’t have as much sunlight. So you’re going to start to see larger temperature swings. From day and night, versus if you’re in the winter, you don’t get much direct sunlight at all. So there’s not much room for the temperature to increase. So you don’t really get as many wild swings.”</p> <p>The same phenomenon regarding daylight and temperature can be flipped for April each year, shortly after the spring equinox: The days get longer more quickly, and the temperature increases most dramatically during April.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/08 Sudan: 7M children without education
SOURCE	https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20221008-sudans-schools-7m-children-without-education/
GIST	<p>A shocking statistic published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) confirmed that 6.9 million Sudanese children do not attend school. This means that one out of every three school-aged children in the country does not receive an education, while another 12 million children do not receive a quality education. The reasons for this are multiple, including the lack of teachers and the degradation of infrastructure. UNICEF has called for securing an environment that enables children to receive an education to achieve their dreams and aspirations.</p> <p>The phenomenon of school dropouts has a long history in Sudan, leading to the spread of illiteracy among more than 30 per cent of the total population of about 40 million people.</p> <p>In its statistics, the international organisation confirmed: "The school is not a place for teaching young people the basics of reading, writing and mathematics, but rather a place for learning social skills and having fun in a safe environment, and it also protects children from the surrounding physical dangers, including mistreatment, exposure to exploitation, and recruitment into militant groups. Moreover, schools provide psychological and social support, which makes them life-saving for many children."</p> <p>Thirteen-year-old child Babiker is one of the millions of Sudanese children who do not attend school. He says that he only studied until the third grade of primary school, then left school for work. Babiker now works in the car cleaning profession to earn money to support his family.</p> <p>Babiker shared that he leaves home early in the morning with his mother, who sells tea in the capital, Khartoum, while he cleans cars to make a living. However, he expressed that he is fully prepared to return to school if the conditions are suitable and feels very sad when he sees his peers going to school while he works on the streets.</p> <p>UNICEF confirms that Sudanese children leave school as a natural result of the worsening social and economic situation, recurrence of conflicts and the closures of schools for long periods due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, stressing that all of this reduces the chances of children returning to school.</p> <p>UNICEF Representative in Sudan Mandeep O'Brien says: "No country can bear the burden of not knowing a third of its school-age children to have no literacy, numeracy or digital skills. Education is not just a right, it is also a lifeline."</p>
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Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	10/10 Cyber espionage group Earth Aghisky
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/researchers-detail-malicious-tools-used.html

GIST	<p>A new piece of research has detailed the increasingly sophisticated nature of the malware toolset employed by an advanced persistent threat (APT) group named Earth Aughisky.</p> <p>"Over the last decade, the group has continued to make adjustments in the tools and malware deployments on specific targets located in Taiwan and, more recently, Japan," Trend Micro disclosed in a technical profile last week.</p> <p>Earth Aughisky, also known as Taidoor, is a cyber espionage group that's known for its ability to abuse legitimate accounts, software, applications, and other weaknesses in the network design and infrastructure for its own ends.</p> <p>While the Chinese threat actor has been known to primarily target organizations in Taiwan, victimology patterns observed towards late 2017 indicate an expansion to Japan.</p> <p>The most commonly targeted industry verticals include government, telecom, manufacturing, heavy, technology, transportation, and healthcare.</p> <p>Attack chains mounted by the group typically leverage spear-phishing as a method of entry, using it to deploy next-stage backdoors. Chief among its tools is a remote access trojan called Taidoor (aka Roudan).</p> <p>The group has also been linked to a variety of malware families, such as GrubbyRAT, K4RAT, LuckDLL, Serkdes, Taikite, and Taleret, as part of its attempts to consistently update its arsenal to evade security software.</p> <p>Some of the other notable backdoors employed by Earth Aughisky over the years are as follows -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SiyBot, a basic backdoor that uses public services like Gubb and 30 Boxes for command-and-control (C2) • TWTRAT, which abuses Twitter's direct message feature for C2 • DropNetClient (aka Buxzop), which leverages the Dropbox API for C2 <p>Trend Micro's attribution of the malware strains to the threat actor is based on the similarities in source code, domains, and naming conventions, with the analysis also uncovering functional overlaps between them.</p> <p>The cybersecurity firm also linked the activities of Earth Aughisky to another APT actor codenamed by Airbus as Pitty Tiger (aka APT24) owing to the use of the same dropper in various attacks that transpired between April and August 2014.</p> <p>2017, the year when the group set its sights on Japan and Southeast Asia, has also been an inflection point in the way the volume of the attacks has exhibited a significant decline since then.</p> <p>Despite the longevity of the threat actor, the recent shift in targets and activities likely suggests a change in strategic objectives or that the group is actively revamping its malware and infrastructure.</p> <p>"Groups like Earth Aughisky have sufficient resources at their disposal that allow them the flexibility to match their arsenal for long-term implementations of cyber espionage," Trend Micro researcher CH Lei said.</p> <p>"Organizations should consider this observed downtime from this group's attacks as a period for preparation and vigilance for when it becomes active again."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Toyota discloses data leak
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/toyota-discloses-data-leak-after-access-key-exposed-on-github/

GIST

Toyota Motor Corporation is warning that customers' personal information may have been exposed after an access key was publicly available on GitHub for almost five years.

Toyota T-Connect is the automaker's official connectivity app that allows owners of Toyota cars to link their smartphone with the vehicle's infotainment system for phone calls, music, navigation, notifications integration, driving data, engine status, fuel consumption, and more.

Toyota discovered recently that a portion of the T-Connect site source code was mistakenly published on GitHub and contained an access key to the data server that stored customer email addresses and management numbers.

This made it possible for an unauthorized third party to access the details of 296,019 customers between December 2017 and September 15, 2022, when access to the GitHub repository was restricted.

On September 17, 2022, the database's keys were changed, purging all potential access from unauthorized third parties.

The announcement explains that customer names, credit card data, and phone numbers have not been compromised as they weren't stored in the exposed database.

Toyota blamed a development subcontractor for the error but recognized its responsibility for the mishandling of customer data and apologized for any inconvenience caused.

The Japanese automaker concludes that while there are no signs of data misappropriation, it cannot rule out the possibility of someone having accessed and stolen the data.

"As a result of an investigation by security experts, although we cannot confirm access by a third party based on the access history of the data server where the customer's email address and customer management number are stored, at the same time, we cannot completely deny it," - [explains the notice](#) (machine translated).

For this reason, all users of T-Connect who registered between July 2017 and September 2022 are advised to be vigilant against phishing scams and avoid opening email attachments from unknown senders claiming to be from Toyota.

Forgetting passwords in the code

This type of security incident has become a large-scale problem that places troves of sensitive data at risk of exposure.

In September, Symantec's security analysts unveiled that nearly [2,000 applications for iOS and Android](#) contain hard-coded AWS credentials in their code.

This is typically the result of developer negligence, storing credentials in the code to make asset fetching, service access, and configuration updating quick and easy while testing multiple app iterations.

These credentials should be removed when the software is ready for actual deployment, but unfortunately, as the case of the T-Connect app shows, this isn't always done.

Due to this ongoing problem, GitHub has begun [scanning published code for secrets](#) and [blocking code commits](#) that contain authentication keys to better secure projects.

However, if a developer uses non-standard access keys or custom tokens, GitHub will not be able to detect them by default.

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SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/caffeine-service-lets-anyone-launch-microsoft-365-phishing-attacks/
GIST	<p>A phishing-as-a-service (PhaaS) platform named 'Caffeine' makes it easy for threat actors to launch attacks, featuring an open registration process allowing anyone to jump in and start their own phishing campaigns.</p> <p>Caffeine doesn't require invites or referrals, nor does it require wannabe threat actors to get approval from an admin on Telegram or a hacking forum. Due to this, it removes much of the friction that characterizes almost all platforms of this kind.</p> <p>Another distinctive characteristic of Caffeine is that its phishing templates target Russian and Chinese platforms, whereas most PhaaS platforms tend to focus on lures for Western services.</p> <p>Mandiant's analysts discovered and tested Caffeine thoroughly, and today report that it's a worryingly feature-rich PhaaS considering its low barrier for entry.</p> <p>The cybersecurity firm first spotted Caffeine after investigating a large-scale phishing campaign run through the service, targeting one of Mandiant's clients to steal Microsoft 365 account credentials.</p> <p>Fueling phishing campaigns</p> <p>Caffeine requires account creation, after which the operator gets immediate access to the "Store," which contains phishing campaign-creation tools and an overview dashboard.</p> <p>Next, the operators must purchase a subscription license, which costs \$250 per month, \$450 for three months, or \$850 for six months, depending on the features.</p> <p>That's roughly 3-5 times the typical PhaaS subscription cost, and Caffeine attempts to make up for it by offering anti-detection and anti-analysis systems and customer support services.</p> <p>In terms of phishing options, some of the advanced features offered by the platform include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms to customize dynamic URL schemas to assist in dynamically generating pages pre-populating with victim-specific information. • First-stage campaign redirect pages and final lure pages. • IP blocklisting options for geo-blocking, CIDR range-based blocking, etc. <p>After setting the main phishing campaign parameters, the operators will have to deploy the phishing kit, which is currently limited to a Microsoft 365 login page, and then select a phishing template.</p> <p>Caffeine offers several phishing template options, including Microsoft 365 and various lures for Chinese and Russian platforms. Mandiant believes more will be added soon.</p> <p>The platform also allows operators to use its own Python or PHP-based email management utility to send out phishing emails to their targets, reducing the need for external tools.</p> <p>While Mandiant gives detection guidance for catching Caffeine-backed phishing emails, the analysts highlight the possibility of the crooks adopting new evasion techniques that could render that report's section obsolete.</p> <p>Sadly, Caffeine is yet another option added to the choices available to low-skill cyber criminals on the look for automated platforms, which could become a bigger problem if more templates are added to its collection.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Emotet rises: sophisticated, evasive
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/emotet-rises-again-with-more-sophistication-evasion

The threat group behind the Emotet malware-delivery botnet has resurrected the malware-as-a-service offering with more sophisticated countermeasures to foil takedowns.

According to a 68-page analysis on Oct. 10 from VMware's Threat Analysis Unit — based on data collected from several new Emotet campaigns in early 2022 — the group has learned lessons from the [2021 law enforcement takedown](#) of the group's infrastructure. That includes creating more complex and subtle chains of execution, hiding its configurations, and hardening its command-and-control (C2) infrastructure. In addition, the group recently updated two of the eight modules to improve credit-card stealing functionality and its capabilities for spreading laterally through a network.

Overall, the research suggests that Emotet is continuously changing to make it more difficult for defenders to adapt and block the malware, Chad Skipper, global security technologist at VMware, stated in a press briefing.

"Emotet [has] embraced its role as a malware distributor, focusing more on advancing its technique for initial infection and relying on waves of spam emails that entice users to open up documents and click on links," he said.

The [analysis of Emotet](#) completes the malware-as-a-service group's resurrection, following a takedown in January 2021 by international law enforcement. Just the month before the takedown, Check Point Software Technologies had estimated that 7% of companies had been affected by the botnet. Law enforcement agencies gained control of the infrastructure and disrupted Emotet's infection and payload-delivery capabilities.

In late 2021, however, updated versions of Emotet and Conti began being [distributed by another group, Trickbot](#), bootstrapping the [once-defunct malware network and bringing it back from the dead](#).

The group behind Emotet — often referred to as Mummy Spider, MealyBug, or TA542, depending on different security firm nomenclature — typically uses waves of spam email messages and specially crafted messages to convince users to click on malicious links or open malicious documents. Access to the compromised machines is then sold to interested groups, who then steal data, install ransomware, or find other ways to monetize access.

VMware's TAU group analyzed data collected from the spam messages, URLs, and malicious attachments to classify the attacks into different waves, map the attacker's C2 infrastructure, and reverse engineer any delivered malware to gain insight into the attacker's activities.

The two waves analyzed by VMware in the report both used a malicious Excel document to infect systems, with the first — and smaller — wave using XL4 macro, while the second wave paired that with PowerShell. The researchers deconstructed the attacks into initial invocation variations and into execution flows finding 139 unique program chains and 20,955 unique invocation chains, which are variants made to make the infection look unique.

"Based on a new similarity metric, [the research group] was able to identify various stages of Emotet attacks with a number of initial infection waves that change the way in which the malware is delivered," VMware stated in its analysis.

Other recent updates include a module that targets Google's Chrome browsers to steal credit card information, and a second module that spread the infection to other computers using the Server Message Block (SMB) protocol, a common technique for hackers.

The threat actors also use significant anti-analysis countermeasures to attempt to hide the details of their C2 infrastructure, the report stated. The post-recovery version of Emotet has two major sets of infrastructure, which VMware calls Epoch 4 and Epoch 5, which have only a single common IP address between them. In addition, the malware could be executed using any of 139 different program chains, although 80% of the samples analyzed belonged to one of four different chains.

The most popular chain involved "a simple three-stage attack involving the execution of Excel and regsvr32.exe," the report stated. "The second most popular chain shows the same attack chain as the first but with an additional stage."

VMware found that the attackers' infrastructure led back to 328 different IP addresses, 18% of which were in the United States, with Germany and France accounting for a significant share as well. However, the servers hosting modules, updates and other payloads came from a different set of IP addresses, with the largest share (26%) hosted in India.

"[T]he IP addresses of the servers hosting the Emotet modules can be different from the IP addresses extracted from the initial Emotet payload configuration," the report stated. "[M]ost of the IP addresses extracted from the configuration were likely to be compromised legitimate servers used to proxy the actual servers that hosted the Emotet modules."

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HEADLINE	10/10 Half have unwanted online subscription?
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3669828/half-of-wa-may-have-online-subscription-they-dont-want/
GIST	<p>More than half of all people in Washington state may have unintentionally enrolled in a subscription service.</p> <p>Attorney General Bob Ferguson released a survey Monday that shows 59% of Washingtonians may be enrolled in a plan they thought was a one-time purchase.</p> <p>Unwanted subscriptions</p> <p>“This survey reveals that corporations are deceiving Washingtonians into paying for unwanted subscriptions – and consumers want this practice to end,” Ferguson said in a press release. “If you unintentionally signed up for a subscription service, contact my office so we can help.”</p> <p>The survey showed that around 100,000 people may not have been able to cancel the subscription because they found it too difficult. Those pre-checked boxes may be one of the main culprits when it comes to unintentionally subscribing to services, with 70% of those surveyed thinking pre-checked boxes should be prohibited.</p> <p>“Reputable retailers will give you straightforward procedures for setting up, canceling, or changing your account settings,” AARP State Director Marguerite Ro said. “If those terms are difficult to find or understand, beware.”</p> <p>One-third say online retailers are the problem</p> <p>29% of people cited online retailers as the most common source of the problem, and Amazon was the company that was mentioned the most by consumers for engaging in this practice.</p> <p>The survey is part of the Attorney General’s Honest Fees Initiative.</p> <p>Hardwick Research conducted its online survey from June 24 through July 7, and 1,207 adult Washington consumers answered the survey. Respondents split between 50% female and 48% male. Among age groups, one-third are between the ages of 18-34, one-third 35-55, and one-third 55 or more years old.</p> <p>The average respondent’s household income was \$76,500.</p> <p>Contacting Attorney General’s office is encouraged</p> <p>Attorney General Ferguson urges consumers to file a complaint with his office if they inadvertently signed up for a subscription while attempting to make a one-time purchase.</p> <p>The Attorney General’s Office responds to every consumer complaint. It fields approximately 24,000 complaints annually, and returns approximately \$18 million per year to consumers through its informal</p>

	complaint resolution process, which involves working with businesses to resolve consumer complaints pre-investigation or litigation.
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HEADLINE	10/10 State Bar of Georgia confirms data breach
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/state-bar-georgia-confirms-data-breach-following-ransomware-attack
GIST	<p>The State Bar of Georgia was hit by a ransomware attack earlier this year and the organization has now confirmed that member and employee information was compromised.</p> <p>The incident occurred in April 2022 and was disclosed in early May, when few details were shared by the organization. Roughly one month later, the bar revealed that the attack involved BitLocker ransomware, which encrypted tens of servers and workstations.</p> <p>“Although this has been officially described as a ransomware attack, no monetary demand has been made and no proof of possession of any personally identifiable information or other data has been provided,” a State Bar of Georgia representative said at the time.</p> <p>The bar initially said there was no evidence that personal information had been compromised, but a statement released last week revealed that some information on current and former employees, as well as members, may have been obtained by the attacker.</p> <p>Exposed personal information includes names, addresses, dates of birth, social security numbers, driver’s license numbers, direct deposit information, or name change information.</p> <p>“Although we had security protocols and technology in place to help prevent unauthorized access, some of those defenses were evaded,” the bar said.</p> <p>Every individual authorized to practice law in the State of Georgia is required to be a member, and the organization claims to have more than 50,000 members.</p> <p>Impacted individuals are being offered free credit monitoring and identity protection services.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 German cybersecurity chief under scrutiny
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/german-cybersecurity-chief-investigated-over-russia-ties/2022/10/10/3b9d046c-487f-11ed-8153-96ee97b218d2_story.html
GIST	<p>BERLIN — The head of Germany’s national cybersecurity agency is under scrutiny over reports of ties to Russian intelligence, officials said Monday.</p> <p>Arne Schoenbohm, who heads the BSI agency, co-founded a cybersecurity group a decade ago that brings together experts from public institutions and the private sector. German media reported that one of its members is a company founded by a former Russian intelligence agent.</p> <p>“The Interior Ministry takes the matters reported over the weekend seriously and is investigating them comprehensively,” the ministry said in a statement.</p> <p>There is growing concern in Germany that the country’s critical infrastructure might be targeted by Russia because of Berlin’s support for Ukraine. On Saturday, an apparent act of sabotage forced German rail company Deutsche Bahn to halt passenger and cargo trains across the northwest of the country for nearly three hours.</p> <p>After the nearly three-hour suspension, Deutsche Bahn said the problem — a “failure of the digital train radio system” — had been resolved but that some disruptions could still be expected. It later said the outage was caused by sabotage.</p>

	Transport Minister Volker Wissing said cables that are “essential for handling railway traffic safely” were deliberately severed at two separate locations. He said Germany’s federal police were investigating the incident.
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HEADLINE	10/10 KillNet claims DDoS attacks on airports
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-airports-taken-down-in-ddos-attacks-by-pro-russian-hackers/
GIST	<p>The pro-Russian hacktivist group 'KillNet' is claiming large-scale distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks against websites of several major airports in the U.S., making them inaccessible.</p> <p>The DDoS attacks have overwhelmed the servers hosting these sites with garbage requests, making it impossible for travelers to connect and get updates about their scheduled flights or book airport services.</p> <p>Notable examples of airport websites that are currently unavailable include the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL), one of the country's larger air traffic hubs, and the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), which is intermittently offline or very slow to respond.</p> <p>Other airports returning database connection errors include Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD), Orlando International Airport (MCO), Denver International Airport (DIA), Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX), along with some in Kentucky, Mississippi, and Hawaii.</p> <p>KillNet listed the domains yesterday on its Telegram channel, where members and volunteers of the hacktivist group gather to acquire new targets.</p> <p>They are relying on custom software to generate fake requests and garbage traffic directed at the targets with the goal of depleting their resources and making them unavailable to legitimate users.</p> <p>In this case, the DDoS attacks do not impact flights, but they still have an adverse effect on the function of a crucial economic sector, threatening to disrupt or delay associated services.</p> <p>KillNet has previously targeted countries that sided with Ukraine, like Romania and Italy, while its "sub-group" Legion struck key Norwegian and Lithuanian entities for similar reasons.</p> <p>As the war in Ukraine has entered a new phase, pro-Russian threat actors and hacktivists are trying to ramp up their retaliatory cyberattacks against neuralgic organizations in the western world.</p> <p>The U.S., being the de-facto leader of NATO, which is Russia's main military rival, has supplied Ukraine with intelligence and equipment from early on in the war, but DDoS attacks so far seemed to be focused on EU targets, especially after the announcement of sanctions.</p> <p>KillNet's targeting scope expanded to include the U.S. only last week when the DDoS group attacked government websites in Colorado, Kentucky, and Mississippi, with moderate success.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Heat from fingertips to crack passwords?
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/heat-fingertips-used-crack-passwords-102357016.html
GIST	<p>Heat-detecting cameras can help crack passwords up to a minute after typing them, researchers have found, as they warn similar systems could be developed by criminals to break into computers and smartphones.</p> <p>Heat from people’s fingertips can be detected on recently-used keyboards and, when thermal images were combined with the help of artificial intelligence, informed guesses of what the password could be were made by a tool developed by researchers at the University of Glasgow.</p>

Some 86% of passwords were cracked when thermal images were taken within 20 seconds of typing in the secret code and put through their ThermoSecure system, and 76% when within 30 seconds. Success dropped to 62% after 60 seconds of entry.

They also found within 20 seconds, the system was capable of successfully attacking even long passwords of 16 characters, with a rate of up to 67% correct attempts.

It's important that computer security research keeps pace with these developments to find new ways to mitigate risk, and we will continue to develop our technology to try to stay one step ahead of attackers

Mohamed Khamis, School of Computing Science

As passwords grew shorter, success rates increased. Twelve-symbol passwords were guessed up to 82% of the time, eight-symbol passwords up to 93% of the time, and six-symbol passwords were successful in 100% of attempts.

Mohamed Khamis, of the [Scottish](#) university's School of Computing Science, said: "They say you need to think like a thief to catch a thief.

"We developed ThermoSecure by thinking carefully about how malicious actors might exploit thermal images to break into computers and smartphones."

In the images captured by the heat-detecting cameras, areas appear more bright the more recently they were touched.

Thermal attacks can occur after users type their password on a keyboard, smartphone screen or keypad, before leaving the device unguarded.

A passer-by equipped with a thermal camera can take a picture that reveals the heat signature of where their fingers have touched the device, with the brighter an area appears the more recently it had been touched.

By measuring the relative intensity of the warmer areas, researchers found, it was possible to determine the specific letters, numbers of symbols that make up the password and estimate the order in which they were used.

Dr Khamis, who led the development of the technology with Norah Alotaibi and John Williamson, said with thermal imaging cameras more affordable than ever and machine learning becoming more accessible, it was "very likely that people around the world are developing systems along similar lines to ThermoSecure in order to steal passwords".

"It's important that computer security research keeps pace with these developments to find new ways to mitigate risk, and we will continue to develop our technology to try to stay one step ahead of attackers," he said.

The researchers, who published their findings in the journal ACM Transactions on [Privacy](#) and [Security](#), also found how a user types affects the heat signature left on the keyboard, and therefore how easy it was to crack passwords.

"Hunt-and-peck" keyboard users who type slowly tend to leave their fingers on the keys for longer, creating heat signatures which last longer than faster touch-typists.

Meanwhile, the type of material keyboards are made from can affect their ability to absorb heat, with some plastics much more likely to retain a heat pattern than others.

Dr Khamis said longer passwords should be used wherever possible, with those more difficult to guess accurately.

	<p>“Backlit keyboards also produce more heat, making accurate thermal readings more challenging, so a backlit keyboard with PBT plastics could be inherently more secure,” he said.</p> <p>“Finally, users can help make their devices and keyboards more secure by adopting alternative authentication methods, like fingerprint or facial recognition, which mitigate many of the risks of thermal attack.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 NKorea quietly becomes crypto superpower
SOURCE	https://www.cnet.com/culture/features/north-koreas-crypto-hackers-are-paving-the-road-to-nuclear-armageddon/
GIST	<p>It was an astonishing interview for recruiter Elliott Garlock. While screening candidate engineers for a crypto firm in February, Garlock encountered one applicant who raised almost every conceivable red flag.</p> <p>The interviewee joined the Zoom interview with his camera off and had to be cajoled into turning it on. There was constant chatter in the background, like he was jammed in a small, crowded room. He claimed to be from San Francisco but, when pressed, wasn't able to pinpoint his location more precisely than "Bay Area."</p> <p>It was a strange and unproductive interview. Worst of all, it was the first of many. Garlock, the founder of the Stella Talent Partners recruitment firm, soon encountered another, nearly identical candidate. Then another, and another and another.</p> <p>"I got annoyed after a while, because it was a total waste of time," Garlock said. "I originally thought the scam was that they were offshore, trying to take advantage of remote work to just get a salary for not working."</p> <p>Now there's a new hypothesis: The people interviewing for jobs were North Koreans trying to siphon money to the reclusive nation. That's in accord with warnings from both the FBI and the Treasury Department, which have cautioned about North Korea's escalating risk to the cryptocurrency industry.</p> <p>The danger is more than theoretical, as one catastrophic hack in March showed. The Lazarus Group, a hacking outfit associated with North Korea's government, managed to drain over \$600 million in crypto from a blockchain used by NFT game Axie Infinity. North Korean hackers stole \$840 million in the first five months of 2022, according to Chainalysis data, over \$200 million more than they'd plundered in 2020 and 2021 combined.</p> <p>That is of extraordinary consequence. About a third of the crypto North Korea loots goes into its weapons program, including nuclear weapons, estimates Anne Neuberger, a deputy national security adviser in the Biden administration. It's also funneled to the country's espionage operations. When two South Koreans earlier this year were revealed to have been stealing military information for a North Korean spy, it turned out they'd been paid in bitcoin.</p> <p>"Crypto is arguably now essential to North Korea," said Nick Carlsen, a former North Korea analyst at the FBI who now works for crypto security firm TRM Labs. "By any standard, they are a crypto superpower."</p> <p>A crypto superpower with nuclear weapons, that is. A country whose crypto prowess, North Korea watchers say, is directly funding the development of those nukes, with the odds of a new nuclear weapons test growing. The rogue nation has been ratcheting up ballistic missile tests in the past 10 days: Over 5 million residents of Japan were told to seek immediate shelter on Wednesday after North Korea launched a missile over the island of Hokkaido. It's highly likely this, too, was funded at least in part by stolen cryptocurrency.</p>

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as North Korea is formally known, has come to depend more on crypto since the pandemic began. It historically relied on black market trade, exporting coal, meth, cigarettes and labor to Southeast Asia, Russia and especially China. But the zero COVID strategy of leader Kim Jong Un has closed borders, thinning the country's already slight revenues. Trade with China, by far North Korea's biggest economic partner, [fell 80% in 2020](#), and [reports of food shortages](#) abound. At the same time, cryptocurrency values have skyrocketed.

Despite the recent crypto crash, bitcoin is trading 250% higher than before the pandemic. Ether, the second biggest cryptocurrency, is up over 700%.

Garlock estimates he encountered a dozen candidates he now considers North Korean operatives between February and April. None of them got referred to one of his client companies, which is lucky. North Korean hackers have shown they can cause immense damage if they manage to dupe just one person.

One bad click

A single corrupted file can leave disaster in its wake. The Axie Infinity hack that netted North Korea over \$600 million in crypto started with just that: a tainted PDF.

Axie Infinity is a web browser game similar to Pokemon, except that the Axie creatures you battle are owned as NFTs and can be traded for crypto. To support this digital economy, developer Sky Mavis created its own blockchain called Ronin, whose sole purpose is to process Axie Infinity transactions. At its peak in August 2021, the game [was generating over \\$15 million a day](#). A senior engineer who worked on Ronin was approached by North Korean operatives on LinkedIn earlier this year, according to [a report from The Block](#). After several rounds of interviews, the engineer received a formal job offer via PDF.

The Ronin blockchain runs on a proof-of-authority model, wherein validation control is given to nine handpicked accounts. To gain control of the blockchain, bad actors needed to control five of these nine validator accounts. When the senior engineer clicked the infected link, he unwittingly gave North Korean hackers keys to four of those validators. Once they were inside Axie Infinity's computer system, hackers were able to get keys for a fifth. The \$600 million was drained shortly after.

Sky Mavis didn't respond to a request for comment. But in a post-mortem published in April, the company said: "Sky Mavis employees are under constant advanced spear-phishing attacks on various social channels and one employee was compromised. ... The attacker managed to leverage that access to penetrate Sky Mavis IT infrastructure and gain access to the validator nodes."

It's possible the North Korean operatives hired a middleman company to orchestrate the faux employer phishing scheme. That's what they [did in 2019](#), paying an actor to play an executive in fake job interviews with the goal of infiltrating the computer systems of Chile's Redbanc. (North Korea never got to steal from the bank, thanks to an eagle-eyed IT guy, who saw suspicious activity on the network.)

It's tempting to write off the Ronin hack as a disorganized crypto company being exploited. But the same tactics have worked against world-renowned targets. The infamous Sony hack of 2014, a response to the studio's distribution of Seth Rogan's *The Interview*, a comedy about an assassination attempt on Kim, was achieved in much the same way. Hackers gained access to Sony's computer network by pretending to be a businessman, former assistant US attorney Tony Lewis [told the BBC](#).

Emails from the businessman, ostensibly about his wish to work with Sony, contained a link infected with malware, a link that at least one employee clicked. Two months later, computers at Sony headquarters went black, and the Lazarus Group, North Korea's most notorious hacking outfit, made its presence known. (At the time, the culprits called themselves Guardians of Peace.)

Months later, North Korean operatives pretended to be a job applicant and sent resumes to employees of Bangladesh's central bank. This time at least three employees clicked the link, [according to Symantec cybersecurity expert Eric Chien](#), giving them access to the bank's computer network. The attackers waited a

full year to make their move and, in February 2016, [attempted to send \\$951 million from Bangladesh Bank's account](#) with the Federal Reserve to accounts in the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

It was a carefully orchestrated heist. Hackers spent a year learning about the bank's IT system, and planned the robbery on a Thursday that coincided with both Bangladesh's Friday-Saturday weekend and a Philippine public holiday on the Monday, delaying alerts on both ends. Yet it was hamstrung by a stroke of bad luck. After several transactions went through, the Federal Reserve blocked the next \$851 million. The attackers sent money to a Philippine bank located on a Jupiter Street. That triggered an alert because, by sheer coincidence, an unrelated Greek company called Jupiter Seaways Shipping was already on the Fed's sanctions watch list for [helping Iran bypass oil sanctions](#).

Though it didn't go to plan, North Korean operatives still [managed to steal \\$64 million](#) from Bangladesh Bank.

"All of the skills they've learned, they're basically now applying it to crypto," said Soo Kim, a former CIA analyst who's now at the Rand Corporation, a think tank.

North Korea's considerable cyber capabilities are a paradox. In a [rare 2017 survey the UN was allowed to conduct](#), only 1% of North Korean households were found to have internet access. Despite this, the DPRK has developed a formidable army of computer hackers.

"They basically do a talent search when kids from elite families are sent to elementary schools," Rand's Kim explained. "They send these kids abroad to Russia to get the [hacking] skills, and that's how they patriotically serve the country. They find ways to infiltrate networks."

It's estimated that [around 7,000 North Koreans](#) work in North Korea's cyber program. Kim Jong Un in the past [has called](#) his elite cyberattackers "warriors" that can "penetrate any sanctions for the construction of a strong and prosperous nation."

Crypto is an obvious target for these cyber soldiers. The very point of cryptocurrency is decentralization, meaning there's no Federal Reserve to block \$851 million. The Ronin hack was a boon for North Korea. Naturally, it didn't stop there.

Harmony Bridge is a protocol that allows traders to send crypto between blockchains. It was exploited in June, [and drained of \\$100 million](#). The FBI has named North Korea as the culprit. The hack started like all the others, with one person making an honest mistake.

"We believe the hackers ... employed phishing schemes to trick at least one software developer to install malicious software on their laptop," Harmony core team member Jack Chan [wrote in August](#).

In just two moves, North Korea stole \$700 million worth of crypto, over 10 times the amount it burgled from Bangladesh Bank. It's also more than the \$650 million the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses estimates North Korea [spent on missile tests between January and June](#).

Hard interviews

William Burleson describes speaking to a suspected North Korean operative as "one of the most awkward things I've done in my life." Burleson is head of growth at crypto recruitment firm Up Top Search, and was building the company's Discord channel so recruitment could be done within the popular messaging platform.

In his first week on the job, Burleson encountered three suspicious candidates he now believes were North Korean operatives.

Just as in Garlock's cases, the candidates were apprehensive about turning their cameras on. In some cases Burleson could hear whispering, as though someone offscreen was trying to tell the candidate how to answer Burleson's questions in real time.

"Just very weird, delayed responses, hearing the same words or phrases consistently," Burleson said, describing the interviews. "I know they weren't based in the States [as they claimed] due to the time zone difference. I only saw them appearing online on Discord during the Eastern Asia hours."

These candidates typically have poor English skills, but a language barrier isn't what makes these interviews so stilted. Encountering ESL engineers and developers isn't unusual in crypto recruitment — there was something different, something intangibly amiss with these particular candidates.

"This group of people have these very flat affects," Garlock recalls. "They don't have positive or negative emotions that flash on their face."

Burleson called talking to them eerie. "You could just tell, human to human, something is off."

He noted that several sketchy candidates, instead of leaving a resume, would leave links on Discord to protocols they had allegedly worked on. When Burleson ran these links through a safety checker, they always failed the test.

Infected links are a dead giveaway of suspicious activity, but it's not always so obvious. Dan Eskow, founder of Up Top Search, thinks he has a way of identifying these North Korean operatives.

"Instead of going through your pitch, you ask him, 'How's the weather in Kansas? How's your day going?'" Eskow explained. "They explode. They panic because their instructor, whoever's telling them what to say, hasn't prepared them to answer questions like 'How's the weather?'"

One time, Burleson said, a candidate left the call after being asked an off-topic query. Most times, a tangential question is just met with an uncomfortable blank stare.

Operations attributed to North Korea vary in their sophistication. Mandiant, a cybersecurity firm that [in July warned of increased North Korean activity in crypto](#), says there are likely several groups within North Korea working to funnel money from crypto to the regime. The Lazarus Group is the best known cell of hackers, but only one of many.

Some groups are more skilled than others. Much of what Mandiant detects is sloppy work. Bad actors have presented screenshots of code they claim to have written, only for these pictures to be discovered stolen from freelance job boards. Often these operatives steal resumes but don't even bother changing the names and references.

"There are most likely thousands of these operators attempting to gain employment all over the world, and each individual can run multiple personas all at the same time," said Joe Dobson, senior principal analyst at Mandiant.

There are several reasons crypto firms are particularly vulnerable to North Korea infiltration. Normalized remote work allows bad actors operating out of North Korea or China to feign US or Canadian origin. Crypto culture also relishes anonymity. Personal details are often rejected at a philosophical level as being irrelevant — the very creator of bitcoin, Satoshi Nakamoto, remains pseudonymous to this day. And while tech companies often hire people to build the company around, Garlock says, crypto companies approach hiring more experimentally: hire liberally, keep them if they're good, cut them if they're not.

Many crypto companies are run by young, first-time CEO entrepreneurs, Garlock explained. People who tend to know a lot about crypto but have little or no experience running a company. "At the same time, they're super capitalized," he said. "You have, like, a 25-year-old crypto CEO, who, between his crypto assets and cash assets, has between \$25 [million] and \$500 million in capital."

The reasons North Korea targets the crypto industry are easy to understand. What happens after the money is stolen, however, is less obvious.

After the steal

Authorities and researchers are slowly piecing together the details of North Korea's crypto activities, but a few crucial pieces are missing. We know North Korea doesn't liquidate stolen crypto in one big sale. Instead, it sells batches of bitcoin and ether over a period of months or years, trickle feeding the regime millions of dollars at a time. The crypto stolen from the Ronin blockchain in March, for instance, is still being offloaded.

That's according to Nick Carlsen, the former FBI researcher now at TRM Labs, who tracks North Korea's blockchain activities. Selling all the crypto at once, or at more regular intervals, would make it much easier to trace.

"What they're doing with this Ronin hack, they're up against the limit of how much money you can launder in the crypto ecosystem," Carlsen said.

Laundering cryptocurrency is easier than laundering US bills, but it still requires work. Bad guys make use of several tools. First are bridges, like the Harmony Bridge that North Korea hacked, which allow traders to send crypto between different blockchains. Then there are mixers, which mask where crypto comes from. You could, for instance, send 5 bitcoin from Wallet A to a mixer, where it's tumbled around with crypto sent by other people. Five bitcoin are then taken from that pool and sent to Wallet B, making it harder to track its precise provenance.

Just as money launderers shift money between different banks and institutions, crypto launderers send money between bridges and mixers in order to hide blemished tokens within bags of clean ones. To disguise funds stolen from Ronin, tokens have been sent between 12,000 different crypto addresses, [according to Chainalysis](#).

The US is trying to make this process harder for crypto launderers in general and North Korea in particular. Citing the threat from the Kim regime, the US Treasury banned bitcoin mixer [Blender in May](#), followed by the [Tornado Cash](#) mixer in August.

"We are taking action against illicit financial activity by the DPRK and will not allow state-sponsored thievery and its money-laundering enablers to go unanswered," Brian Nelson, the US Treasury's undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, said in May.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle is the crypto exchanges you or your friends might use. Exchanges like Binance and Coinbase are dead ends for blockchain tracers. It's easy to see that money is sent to an exchange like Binance, but tracking those tokens within the exchange — between different user accounts, for instance — is impossible without subpoena power, said Convex Labs head of research Nick Bax.

It would be too strong to call exchanges like Binance safe havens. They have anti-money laundering protocols, some with actual teeth: [Binance in April recovered \\$5.8 million in crypto stolen from Ronin](#), for instance. Still, to researchers like Bax, the barriers that exchanges throw up are far harder to penetrate than mixers like Tornado Cash.

"Roughly 25% of the funds deposited in Tornado over a certain timespan originated in the Ronin hack," Bax said. "You can't hide that amount of money in that size anonymity pool, it just doesn't work."

"We can trace the funds in and out of Tornado," he added, "but the centralized exchanges, Coinbase, Binance, Houbi, *are* a mixer unless you have subpoena powers."

Bax sees both sides of the issue. The same wall that obstructs his investigations, he points out, has also stopped Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime [from tracing crypto sent to imprisoned political opponent Alexei Navalny](#).

The downside to North Korea's modus operandi is that it takes time and patience, which has proven costly. In the months since the Ronin heist, for instance, the \$600 million haul has been devalued to about \$250

million. But the advantage for the regime is that it can obscure some of its movements. While FBI and crypto researchers are often able to confidently say North Korea is behind a certain hack, it's less clear who's buying North Korea's crypto, and for how much.

It's thought that much of North Korea's stolen crypto is offloaded to Chinese buyers, but few particulars are known. The Department of Justice in 2020 found two Chinese nationals [guilty of laundering some of the \\$100 million North Korea stole](#) from a Hong Kong-based exchange in 2018, but that charge was an exception. What happens after dirty crypto is laundered remains largely opaque.

North Korea is "not going to get 99 cents on the dollar for its crypto," Carlsen explained. "What the actual rate is, I don't think anyone has a really solid answer on that. But the kind of guy who's going to buy \$20 million worth of stolen bitcoin is not going to pay \$20 million."

Mass destruction

Though precise details about buyers are unclear, there's little doubt about where the profits from North Korea's stolen crypto are funneled. "It's going to illegal weapons programs," Rand's Soo Kim said. "It's going to funding Kim's luxurious lifestyle." That ill-gotten crypto gains are funding North Korea's weapons program has also been flagged by the [Treasury](#).

The risks entailed by Kim's weapons program were simultaneously highlighted and overshadowed by the political spectacle of Donald Trump's presidency. But over 5 million Japanese residents were reminded of those risks on Wednesday when North Korea launched a ballistic missile over the island of Hokkaido. The launch triggered Hokkaido's air-raid alerts, and any resident watching TV was urged to take shelter immediately.

It was the fifth launch from North Korea in a week, with other missiles landing in Korean and Japanese seas. After staying relatively quiet during the pandemic, the Kim regime has resumed an aggressive stance against the US and South Korea, its perennial rival. In September, North Korea's parliament [rubber-stamped a new law](#) stating nuclear missiles would be launched if South Korea or the US tried to assassinate Kim.

When South Korea's new president, Yoon Suk-yeol, offered Kim economic incentives for denuclearization, the DPRK regime balked. Kim's sister, Yo Jong, said Yoon was "still childish" and "should shut his mouth."

"No one barter their destiny for corn cake," she added.

North Korea is recognized by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists as [one of the potential flashpoints for a nuclear war](#). Formed by Albert Einstein after atomic weapons flattened Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Bulletin maintains the Doomsday Clock. As unwelcome as your 6 a.m. alarm may be, this alarm clock is far worse: The closer the Doomsday Clock is set to midnight, the closer Bulletin scientists estimate we are to our end.

In January, it was set as late as it's ever been in its 75-year history: 100 seconds to midnight. For comparison, in 1949 after the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb, the Doomsday Clock was set at 3 minutes to midnight. When the Soviet Union dissolved in the early 1990s, the clock was wound back to 17 minutes to midnight.

Recent worries about nuclear war have understandably been concentrated in Ukraine. Facing embarrassing battlefield failures in its war there, Putin has made [increasingly explicit nuclear threats](#). Another problem country is Iran, which is slowly building its nuclear capacity. Like North Korea, Iran has been besieged by economic sanctions. But the Khamenei administration is buoyed by flowing oil reserves. North Korea is unique in its utilization of cryptocurrency to avoid the sanctions tied to its nuclear program.

North Korea's recent missile tests are thought to be partially in response to US Vice President Kamala Harris' [visit to South Korea](#) in September. Experts like Rand's Soo Kim think they presage a nuclear weapons test, which would be the first since September 2017.

"Some people think it's bluffing and, to an extent, there is going to be a little bit of that," Kim said. "But if Kim [Jong Un] was not serious about using the weapons, he would not be displaying them, he would not be flaunting them, and he would not be doing it so diligently."

Nuclear weapons act as an invaluable set of cards for North Korea, Rand's Kim explained. Even if it has no intention of dismantling its weapon program, the regime can play that hand when it needs to. The stakes are so high that officials in Washington and Seoul are forced to take note. Meanwhile, the most effective way to confront North Korea would be with the help of China, North Korea's biggest unofficial trade partner. The trouble is, Soo Kim said, North Korea is itself a bargaining chip for China. It *could* help rein its raucous neighbor in, but what is Washington willing to do in return?

While this game is being played, the Doomsday Clock ticks on.

Teach a man to phish

The US government is limited in what it can do to stop North Korea's crypto heists. The Treasury Department is actively trying to dull laundering tools used by the regime, leading to its bans on Tornado Cash and Blender. Perhaps more significantly, the FBI has been working to recover stolen funds. Collaborating with blockchain analytics firm Chainalysis, the FBI in September [froze \\$30 million in crypto stolen from Ronin](#).

"It's like we're in a catchup game," Soo Kim said, "where you're not fast enough to actually meet North Korea at the destination, but you're always just following after them."

A more effective route, according to Convex Labs' Bax, is to stop the hacks from happening in the first place. "We always take the reactive approach, chasing the money after it's been stolen," he said. "That money is being reinvested into criminal enterprises. We have to prevent it before it happens. That's the only way."

Bax points out that North Korea specializes in phishing scams — estimating that around half of all crypto phishing scams come out of North Korea — and so helping people detect phishing attacks should be a priority. He also advocates government-subsidized security audits. It took only one engineer to be phished for Ronin's funds to be drained, while attackers needed only two signatures to steal \$100 million from Harmony Bridge.

Major hacks attributed to North Korea have died down in recent months. The crypto winter, when bitcoin and ether plunged in value amid recession fears, has led to a hiring freeze. The regime is also still busy laundering the funds it stole during the first half of the year. But the industry has proven too lucrative for North Korea to cease operations.

"It's going to take a really critical moment, some major incident that really shocks people, and then there's going to be a lot of pressure to do something," said Carlsen. "It's a constant waiting game."

"There's going to be another one coming."

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HEADLINE	10/09 Russia military crypto crowdfunding
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2022/10/the-fight-to-cut-off-the-crypto-funding-russias-invasion-of-ukraine/
GIST	As Russian troops have flooded into Ukraine's borders for the past eight months—and with an ongoing mobilization of hundreds of thousands more underway—the Western world has taken drastic measures to cut the economic ties that fuel Russia's invasion and occupation . But even as those global sanctions have carefully excised Russia from global commerce, millions of dollars have continued to flow directly to Russian military and paramilitary groups in a form that's proven harder to control: cryptocurrency.

Since Russia launched its full-blown invasion of Ukraine in February, at least \$4 million worth of cryptocurrency has been collected by groups supporting Russia's military in Ukraine, researchers have found. According to analyses by cryptocurrency-tracing firms Chainalysis, Elliptic, and TRM Labs, as well as investigators at Binance, the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange, recipients include paramilitary groups offering ammunition and equipment, military contractors, and weapons manufacturers. That flow of funds, often to officially sanctioned groups, shows no sign of abating and may even be accelerating: Chainalysis traced roughly \$1.8 million in funding to the Russian military groups in just the past two months, nearly matching the \$2.2 million it found the groups received in the five months prior. And despite the ability to trace those funds, freezing or blocking them has proven difficult, due largely to unregulated or sanctioned cryptocurrency exchanges—most of them based in Russia—cashing out millions in donations earmarked for invaders.

“Our aim is to identify all the crypto wallets being used by Russian military groups and the people helping them; to find, seize and block all this activity that is helping to buy the bullets, the ammunition of this occupation,” says Serhii Kropyva, who until recently served as deputy of Ukraine's Cyber Police and advisor to the country's prosecutor general. “With the close cooperation of companies like Chainalysis and Binance, we can see all the wallets involved in this criminal activity, these money flows of millions of dollars. But we can, unfortunately, see that the transfer is continuing all the time.”

In separate reports, the cryptocurrency-tracing firms and Binance's investigations team each tracked donations to the Russian war effort that very often began with public posts on the messaging app Telegram soliciting crowdfunded donations. Chainalysis, for instance, found Telegram posts from organizations including the pro-Russian media sites Rybar and Southfront, as well as the paramilitary group Rusich—which has ties to the notorious Wagner mercenary group—all posting cryptocurrency donation addresses to Telegram. These posts told followers that the money raised there would be used for everything from weaponized drones to radios, rifle accessories, and body armor. In another instance, Chainalysis points to a fundraiser by a group called Project Terricon that attempted to auction NFTs to support pro-Russian militia groups in Eastern Ukraine, though the NFTs were removed from the marketplace they were hosted on before any bids were placed.

Binance's investigations team, in its own report, found that a total of \$4.2 million in crypto had been funneled to Russian military groups since February. The groups named in its research didn't entirely overlap with those named in Chainalysis' report, suggesting that the overall funding could be far greater than either Binance's or Chainalysis' total. Binance, for instance, points to a pro-Russian “cultural heritage” group known as MOO Veche that has carried out fundraisers for military equipment similar to the kinds funded by the groups Chainalysis flagged. While Binance, TRM Labs, and Elliptic all name MOO Veche as a major fundraiser, Elliptic traced \$1.7 million in crypto donations to the group, far more than the other researchers.

Other organizations that Binance spotted raising money through cryptocurrency crowdfunding on Telegram include the pro-Russian nationalist groups Save Donbas and REAR, as well as the Russian arms manufacturer Lobaev, which it saw directly soliciting donations on the platform. Yet another group, known as Romanov Light, whose fundraising was spotted by TRM Labs and Elliptic, claimed to be collecting crypto for Russian special forces. Romanov Light raised as much as \$330,000 worth of donations, according to Elliptic, which it told donors it spent on military equipment like weapon accessories, flashlights, and armor plates.

Despite the relative clarity of all that financial tracing, preventing cryptocurrency from continuing to bolster Russia's unprovoked incursion into Ukraine hasn't been simple. Exchanges can block or freeze funds at the points where they're exchanged for traditional currency. But according to Chainalysis, the majority of the crypto funds the groups have raised have been cashed out through what the company calls “high-risk” Russian exchanges with little to no precautions against criminal money laundering. In previous reports, Chainalysis has named Chatex, Suex, and Garantex as examples of those Russia-based rogue exchanges—all of which have already been targeted with Western sanctions for their extensive use by criminals. Chatex and Garantex did not respond to WIRED's request for comment. Suex no longer appears to have a public website, and no contact information for the exchange could be found.

Not every exchange that has served as an ATM for Russian military crypto crowdfunding is hosted in Russia, however. Blockchain analysts who spoke to WIRED pointed to seven other exchange services, some hosted in India and China, that have received funds from the pro-Russian groups they tracked, though they declined to name them on the record, in part because the amounts of those funds in most cases were in the single-digit thousands or less.

In one telling example of how hard it is to prevent these cash-outs, however, analysts saw MOO Veche send more than \$150,000 worth of bitcoin to an exchange hosted on the infrastructure of the Chinese cryptocurrency exchange Huobi—a “nested” exchange that essentially uses Huobi as its trading platform. But any responsibility that Huobi might have for blocking or freezing those funds was complicated by another unknown intermediary service that analysts saw the money travel through before entering the Huobi-hosted service. When WIRED reached out to Huobi for comment, it wrote in a statement that it has a “know-your-customer” process “which ensures to the best of our ability that our clients’ source of funds are above board.”

Binance, for its part, says its exchange accounts were also used by four of the groups it tracked and received more than \$208,000 worth of cryptocurrencies. It tells WIRED that it froze all four accounts it discovered. “We’re making sure that no harm comes to civilians as a result of the fundraising that happens in these extremist spaces,” says Jennifer Hicks, who manages Binance’s intelligence and investigations team. “When cryptocurrency exchanges know that something illicit is happening that will end in real-world, kinetic effects like this, it’s the exchange’s responsibility to put a stop to it as fast as possible.”

Even when exchanges do monitor for crypto sent from sanctioned groups like these pro-Russian fundraisers, that dirty money won’t always be straightforward to detect, warns Thibaud Madelin, who leads research at Elliptic. He says he’s increasingly seeing Russian sources of illicit funds use “[bridges](#)” or “coin swaps”—services that allow easy trading of one cryptocurrency for another, often without offering any identifying information—as money-laundering techniques. He’s watched those tools grow in popularity among dark-web black markets and cybercriminal users and expects the same will happen with those seeking to launder illicit arms funding. “It’s a bit early to say definitively. But what we’re seeing is that it’s likely to become a bigger problem,” says Madelin. “They’re likely to mirror the methodologies seen across dark net services users, enabling large-scale money laundering and potentially sanctions evasion.”

Millions of dollars in cryptocurrency funding to Russian troops may be the least of Ukraine’s problems in a war where Russia has thrown billions into its invasion force. Ukraine, it’s worth noting, has also [vastly out-raised Russia in cryptocurrency](#). By Elliptic’s count, the Ukrainian government has collected more than \$77 million in crypto donations since the war began. But that is to be expected, given the West’s broad support of Ukraine following Russia’s unprovoked aggression and the global sanctions placed on Russia. And even the smaller amount of cryptocurrency Russian forces have raised demonstrates cryptocurrency’s ongoing potential to circumvent those sanctions and offer another financial lifeline to Russia’s war machine.

“It’s not like Russia is buying new tanks with this money. They’re paying for thermal imaging scopes and UAVs,” says Andrew Fierman, a sanctions-focused Chainalysis researcher. “But for grassroots facilitation of these militia efforts, any amount of money that they receive to bolster their gear is going to have an impact.” And despite all the light that cryptocurrency tracers can shine on that funding—and the West’s best efforts to stop it—the crypto flow into Russia’s war chest continues.

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HEADLINE	10/09 Protest supporters hack Iran state TV
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/iran-state-tv-hacked-image-supreme-leader-crosshairs
GIST	Hackers backing Iran's wave of women-led protests interrupted a state TV news broadcast with an image of gun-sight crosshairs and flames over the face of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in footage widely shared online on Sunday.

In other anti-regime messages, activists have spray-painted "Death to Khamenei" and "The Police are the Murderers of the People" on public billboards in Tehran.

"The blood of our youths is on your hands," read an on-screen message that flashed up briefly during the TV broadcast Saturday evening, as street protests sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, 22, again rocked Tehran and other cities.

"Police forces used tear gas to disperse the crowds in dozens of locations in Tehran," state news agency IRNA reported, adding the demonstrators "chanted slogans and set fire to and damaged public property, including a police booth".

Anger has flared since the death of Amini on September 16, three days after the young Kurdish woman was arrested by the notorious morality police for an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

"Join us and rise up," read another message in the TV hack claimed by the group Edalat-e Ali (Ali's Justice).

It also posted pictures of Amini and three other women killed in the crackdown that has claimed at least 95 lives according to Norway-based group Iran Human Rights.

Another 90 people were killed in Iran's far southeast, in unrest on September 30 sparked by the alleged rape of a teenage girl by a police chief in Sistan-Baluchestan province, said IHR, citing the UK-based Baluch Activists Campaign.

One Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps member was killed Saturday in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, and a member of the Guards' Basij paramilitary force died in Tehran from "a serious head injury following an armed attack by a mob," IRNA said -- in killings that raised the death toll among security forces to 14.

- 'So many protests' -

Iran has been torn by the biggest wave of social unrest in almost three years, which has seen protesters, including university students and even young schoolgirls chant "Woman, Life, Freedom".

"Videos coming out from Tehran indicate that there are so many protests, in every corner of the city, in small and big numbers," said US-based campaigner and journalist Omid Memarian on Twitter.

In Amini's hometown Saez, Kurdistan, schoolgirls chanted and marched down a street swinging their hijab headscarves in the air, in videos the Hengaw rights group said were recorded on Saturday.

Gruesome footage has emerged from the state's often bloody response, spread online despite widespread internet outages and blocks on all the major social media platforms.

One video shows a man who was shot dead at the wheel of his car in Sanandaj, Kurdistan's capital, where the province's police chief, Ali Azadi, later charged he was "killed by anti-revolutionary forces".

Angry men then appear to take revenge on a member of the feared Basij militia, swarming him and beating him badly, in another widely shared video.

Yet another video clip shows a young woman said to have been shot dead in Mashhad in the country's northeast.

Many on social media said it evoked footage of Neda Agha Soltan, a young woman who became an enduring symbol of the Iranian opposition after she was shot dead at protests in 2009.

- 'Not afraid anymore' -

	<p>In the face of the violence and the online restrictions, protesters have adopted new tactics to spread their message of resistance in public spaces.</p> <p>"We are not afraid anymore. We will fight," read one large banner placed on an overpass of Tehran's Modares highway, seen in images verified by AFP.</p> <p>In other footage, a man with a spray can is seen altering the wording of a government billboard on the same highway from "The Police are the Servants of the People" to "The Police are the Murderers of the People".</p> <p>Several water features in the Iranian capital were said to have been coloured blood-red, but the head of city's municipality parks organisation Ali Mohamad Mokhtari said: "This information is completely false and there isn't any change in the colors of fountains in Tehran".</p> <p>Iran has accused outside forces of stirring up the protests, as solidarity protests have been held in scores of cities worldwide. The United States, European Union and other governments have imposed new sanctions on Iran.</p> <p>On Amini's death, Iran said Friday that a forensic investigation had found that she died as a result of a long-standing medical condition, rather than of blows to the head as claimed by activists.</p> <p>Amini's father told London-based Iran International that he rejected the official report: "I saw with my own eyes that blood had come from Mahsa's ears and the back of her neck."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Facebook login details at risk
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/facebook-login-details-at-risk/
GIST	<p>Facebook's parent company, Meta, has identified over 400 malicious Android and iOS apps that target people in order to steal their Facebook login information.</p> <p>According to Meta, the app discoveries were all made in 2022 and findings have been reported to Apple and Google.</p> <p>The malware apps are disguised as apps with fun or useful functionality. Once downloaded, these apps can steal a user's login information by asking the user to 'login with Facebook' to access the app's features. Once the user has handed over their credentials, the malicious actor can potentially gain full access to an individual's account, message their connections and access private information.</p> <p>"We've shared our findings with industry peers, security researchers and policymakers to help us improve our collective defenses against this threat," Meta said in a statement.</p> <p>The company noted that this is a "highly adversarial space" and, while work is being done to remove the malicious software, some apps evade detection and make it onto legitimate app stores.</p> <p>The apps were listed on the Google Play Store and Apple's App Store disguised as photo editors, fames, VPN services, business apps and other utilities to trick people into downloading them. Meta highlighted some examples that included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo editors, including those that claim to allow you to "turn yourself into a cartoon" • VPNs claiming to boost browsing speed or grant access to blocked content or websites • Phone utilities such as flashlight apps that claim to brighten your phone's flashlight • Mobile games falsely promising high-quality 3D graphics • Health and lifestyle apps such as horoscopes and fitness trackers • Business or ad management apps claiming to provide hidden or unauthorized features not found in official apps by tech platforms

	The most popular category identified was photo editors which accounted for 46.2% of the malicious apps identified. Game apps accounted for 11.7% and VPN apps were also 11.7%.
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HEADLINE	10/08 Callback phishing attacks evolve tactics
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/callback-phishing-attacks-evolve-their-social-engineering-tactics/
GIST	<p>Callback phishing operations have evolved their social engineering methods, keeping old fake subscriptions lure for the first phase of the attack but switching to pretending to help victims deal with an infection or hack.</p> <p>Successful attacks infect victims with a malware loader that drops additional payloads such as remote access trojans, spyware, and ransomware.</p> <p>Callback phishing attacks are email campaigns pretending to be high-priced subscriptions designed to lead to confusion by the recipient as they never subscribed to these services.</p> <p>Enclosed in the email is a phone number the recipient can call to learn more about this "subscription" and cancel it. However, this leads to a social engineering attack that deploys malware on victims' devices and, potentially, full-blown ransomware attacks.</p> <p>According to a new report by Trellix, the latest campaigns target users in the United States, Canada, the UK, India, China, and Japan.</p> <p>It all started with BazarCall</p> <p>Callback phishing attacks first appeared in March 2021 under the name "BazarCall," where threat actors began sending emails pretending to be a subscription to a streaming service, software product, or medical services company, giving a phone number to call if they want to cancel the purchase.</p> <p>When a recipient called the number, the threat actors walked them through a series of steps that led to downloading a malicious Excel file that would install the BazarLoader malware.</p> <p>BazarLoader would provide remote access to an infected device, providing initial access to corporate networks and eventually leading to Ryuk or Conti ransomware attacks.</p> <p>Over time callback phishing attacks have emerged as a significant threat as they are now used by numerous hacking groups, including the Silent Ransom Group, Quantum, and the Royal ransomware /extortion operations.</p> <p>New social engineering tricks</p> <p>The social engineering process has changed in recent callback phishing campaigns, although the bait in the phishing email remains the same, an invoice for a payment made to Geek Squad, Norton, McAfee, PayPal, or Microsoft.</p> <p>Once the recipient calls the scammer on the provided number, they are requested to give the invoicing details for "verification." Next, the scammer declares that there are no matching entries in the system and that the email the victim received was spam.</p> <p>Then, the supposed customer service agent warns the victim that the spam email may have resulted in a malware infection on their machine, offering to connect them with a technical specialist.</p> <p>After a while, a different scammer calls the victim to help them with the infection and directs them to a website where they download malware masqueraded as anti-virus software.</p>

Another variant used in the PayPal-themed phishing attacks is to ask the victim if they use PayPal and then allegedly check their email for compromise, claiming that their account was accessed by eight devices spread across various locations worldwide.

In the security software subscription renewal campaigns, the scammers claim that the security product pre-installed with the victim's laptop expired and was automatically renewed to extend protection.

Eventually, the scammer directs the victim to a cancelation and refund portal, which is, again, the malware-dropping site.

The result of all of these campaigns is convincing the victim to download malware, which could be BazarLoader, remote access trojans, Cobalt Strike, or some other remote access software, depending on the threat actor.

Taking remote control of devices

Trellix says the majority of these recent campaigns are pushing a ClickOnce executable named 'support.Client.exe,' that, when launched, installs the ScreenConnect remote access tool.

"The attacker can also show a fake lock screen and make the system inaccessible to the victim, where the attacker is able to perform tasks without the victim being aware of them," explains Trellix.

In some cases seen by the security analysts, the scammers opened fake cancellation forms and asked the victims to fill them out with their personal details.

Finally, to receive the refund, the victim is urged to log in to their bank account, where they are tricked into sending money to the scammer instead.

"This is achieved by locking the victim's screen and initiating a transfer-out request and then unlocking the screen when the transaction requires an OTP (One Time Password) or a secondary password," explains the Trellix report.

"The victim is also presented with a fake refund successful page to convince him into believing that they have received the refund. The scammer may also send an SMS to the victim with a fake money received message as an additional tactic to prevent the victim from suspecting any fraud."

Of course, losing money is only one of the problems that infected users can face, as the threat actors can drop additional, nastier malware at any time, spying on them long-term and stealing highly sensitive information.

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HEADLINE	10/09 Free: 'BidenCash' dumps 1.2M credit cards
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/darkweb-market-bidencash-gives-away-12-million-credit-cards-for-free/
GIST	<p>A dark web carding market named 'BidenCash' has released a massive dump of 1,221,551 credit cards to promote their marketplace, allowing anyone to download them for free to conduct financial fraud.</p> <p>Carding is the trafficking and use of credit cards stolen through point-of-sale malware, magecart attacks on websites, or information-stealing malware.</p> <p>BidenCash is a stolen cards marketplace launched in June 2022, leaking a few thousand cards as a promotional move.</p> <p>Now, the market's operators decided to promote the site with a much more massive dump in the same fashion that the similar platform 'All World Cards' did in August 2021.</p>

The threat actors announced the credit card dump yesterday on new URLs BidenCash launched late last month in response to DDoS (distributed denial of service) attacks, so it could be a way to promote the new shop domains.

To ensure larger reach, the crooks distribute the collection via a clearnet domain and on other hacking and carding forums.

The freely circulating file contains a mix of “fresh” cards expiring between 2023 and 2026 from [around the world](#), but most entries appear to be from the United States.

The dump of 1.2 million credit cards includes the following credit card and associated personal information:

- Card number
- Expiration date
- CVV number
- Holder’s name
- Bank name
- Card type, status, and class
- Holder’s address, state, and ZIP
- Email address
- SSN
- Phone number

Not all the above details are available for all 1.2 million records, but most entries seen by BleepingComputer contain over 70% of the data types.

The “special event” offer was first spotted Friday by Italian security researchers at [D3Lab](#), who monitors carding sites on the dark web.

The analysts claim these cards mainly come from web skimmers, which are malicious scripts injected into checkout pages of hacked e-commerce sites that steal submitted credit card and customer information.

Authenticity of the dump

Dark web posts and offers of this size are usually scams, so the massive dump of cards could easily be fake data or recycled data from old dumps repackaged under a new name.

BleepingComputer has discussed the authenticity with analysts at D3Lab, who confirmed that the data is real with several Italian banks, so the leaked entries correspond to real cards and cardholders.

However, many of the entries were recycled from previous collections, like the one 'All World Cards' gave away for free last year.

From the data D3Labs has examined so far, about 30% appear to be fresh, so if this applies roughly to the entire dump, at least 350,000 cards would still be valid.

Of the Italian cards, roughly 50% have already been blocked due to the issuing banks having detected fraudulent activity, which means that the actually usable entries in the leaked collection may be as low as 10%.

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HEADLINE	10/09 Intel confirms leaked BIOS code authentic
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/intel-confirms-leaked-alder-lake-bios-source-code-is-authentic/
GIST	Intel has confirmed that a source code leak for the UEFI BIOS of Alder Lake CPUs is authentic, raising cybersecurity concerns with researchers.

Alder Lake is the name of Intel's 12th generation Intel Core processors, released in November 2021.

On Friday, a Twitter user named 'freak' posted links to what was said to be the source code for Intel Alder Lake's UEFI firmware, which they claim was released by 4chan.

The link led to a GitHub repository named 'ICE_TEA_BIOS' that was uploaded by a user named 'LCFCASD.' This repository contained what was described as the 'BIOS Code from project C970.'

The leak contains 5.97 GB of files, source code, private keys, change logs, and compilation tools, with the latest timestamp on the files being 9/30/22, likely when a hacker or insider copied the data.

BleepingComputer has been told that all the source code was developed by Insyde Software Corp, a UEFI system firmware development company.

The leaked source code also contains numerous references to Lenovo, including code for integrations with 'Lenovo String Service', 'Lenovo Secure Suite', and 'Lenovo Cloud Service.'

At this time, it is unclear whether the source code was stolen during a cyberattack or leaked by an insider. However, Intel has confirmed to [Tom's Hardware](#) that the source code is authentic and is its "proprietary UEFI code."

Security researchers concerned

While Intel has downplayed the security risks of the source code leak, security researchers warn that the contents could make it easier to find vulnerabilities in the code.

"The attacker/bug hunter can hugely benefit from the leaks even if leaked OEM implementation is only partially used in the production," explains hardware security firm [Hardened Vault](#).

"The Insyde's solution can help the security researchers, bug hunters (and the attackers) find the vulnerability and understand the result of reverse engineering easily, which adds up to the long-term high risk to the users."

Positive Technologies hardware researcher [Mark Ermolov](#) also warned that the leak included a KeyManifest private encryption key, a private key used to secure Intel's Boot Guard platform.

While it is not clear if the leaked private key is used in production, if it is, hackers could potentially use it to modify the boot policy in Intel firmware and bypass hardware security.

BleepingComputer has contacted Intel, Insyde, and Lenovo with questions about the leak and whether the private keys were used in production.

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HEADLINE	10/09 Fake adult sites push data wipers
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fake-adult-sites-push-data-wipers-disguised-as-ransomware/
GIST	<p>Malicious adult websites push fake ransomware which, in reality, acts as a wiper that quietly tries to delete almost all of the data on your device.</p> <p>While it is unclear how the threat actors promoted the websites, they all used host names that indicated they were offering nude photos, such as nude-girlss.mywire[.]org, sexyphotos.kozow[.]com, and sexy-photo[.]online.</p>

According to threat intelligence firm Cyble, who first reported on the campaign, the websites would automatically prompt users to download an executable named SexyPhotos.JPG.exe that impersonates a JPG image.

However, as [Windows disables file extensions by default](#), a user would have seen a file named SexyPhotos.JPG in their Downloads folder and likely double-clicked on it, thinking it was an image.

Upon launch, the fake ransomware drops four executables (del.exe, open.exe, windll.exe, and windowss.exe) and one batch file (avtstart.bat) in the user's %temp% directory and runs them.

The batch file establishes persistence by copying all four executables to the Windows Startup folder. Next, "windowss.exe" is executed to drop three additional files, including "windows.bat," which performs the renaming.

The result is the renaming of all files to a generic name, like 'Lock_6.fille'. So, while the contents of these files haven't been modified or encrypted, the victims would have no way to figure out their original names.

The ransom notes are dropped by "windll.exe" in various locations under the name "Readme.txt."

The note demands a payment of \$300 in Bitcoin in three days, threatening to double it to \$600 for an extended deadline of seven days, after which all files will be permanently deleted on the attacker's server.

In reality, this fake ransomware has not stolen any data, and as previously mentioned, it's unlikely that the malware author has developed a tool to recover the files.

“Even if a decryptor is provided, renaming files to their original file name is impossible as the malware is not storing them anywhere during the infection,” [comments Cyble in the report](#).

A data wiper in disguise

However, the malware doesn't appear to be ransomware and was designed only to use the fake encryption as a decoy while deleting almost all of the files on your drives.

Cyble discovered that after performing the fake encryption, the malware attempts to execute “dell.exe,” but due to a naming error that results in dropping “del.exe” instead, this step doesn't work in the sample seen by Cyble.

This fake ransomware is an excellent example of how carelessness can lead to data loss, even by buggy, unsophisticated malware.

A possible way to recover from this malware would be to restore your OS to a previous state since the fake ransomware doesn't delete shadow copies.

Of course, this could still result in data loss, depending on the date of the last restore point.

In general, regular backups of your most important data would be the best practice, as an OS re-installation should be the quickest way out of this trouble.

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HEADLINE	10/08 Email defenses under siege
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/remote-workforce/email-defenses-under-siege-phishing-attacks-dramatically-improve
GIST	This week's report that cyberattackers are laser-focused on crafting attacks specialized to bypass Microsoft's default security showcases an alarming evolution in phishing tactics, security experts said this week.

Threat actors are getting better at slipping phishing attacks through the weak spots in platform email defenses, using a variety of techniques, such as zero-point font obfuscation, hiding behind cloud-messaging services, and delaying payload activation, for instance. They're also doing more targeting and research on victims.

As a result, nearly 1 in 5 phishing emails (18.8%) bypassed Microsoft's platform defenses and landed in workers' inboxes in 2022, a rate that increased 74% compared to 2020, according to research published on Oct. 6 by cybersecurity firm Check Point Software. Attackers increasingly used techniques to pass security checks, such as Sender Policy Framework (SPF), and obfuscate functional components of an e-mail, such as using zero-size fonts or hiding malicious URLs from analysis.

The increasing capabilities of attackers is due to the better understanding of current defenses, says Gil Friedrich, vice president of email security at Avanan, an email security firm [acquired by Check Point in August 2021](#).

"It is a family of 10 to 20 techniques, but they all lead to the objective of deceiving a company's security layers," he says. "The end result is always an email that looks genuine to the recipient but looks different to the algorithm that analyzes the content."

Microsoft declined to comment on the research. However, the company has [warned of advanced techniques](#), such as [adversary-in-the-middle phishing \(AiTM\)](#), which uses a custom URL to place a proxy server between a victim and their desired site, allowing the attacker to capture sensitive data, such as usernames and passwords. In July, the company warned that [more than 10,000 organizations had been targeted](#) during one AiTM campaign.

Check Point is not the only vendor to warn that [phishing attacks are getting better](#). In a survey, email security firm Proofpoint found that 83% of organizations experienced a successful email-based phishing attack, [nearly half again as many as suffered such an attack in 2020](#). Cybersecurity firm Trend Micro saw the number of phishing attacks more than double, growing 137% in the first half of 2022 compared to the same period in 2021, according to the firm's [2022 Mid-year Cybersecurity report](#).

Meanwhile, cybercriminals services, such as phishing-as-a-service and malware-as-a-service, are encapsulating the most successful techniques into easy-to-use offerings. In a survey of penetration testers and red teams, [nearly half \(49%\) considered phishing and social engineering](#) to be the attack techniques with the best return on investment.

Research & Recon Inform Phishing

Attackers are improving too because of the effort that cyberattackers make in collecting intel for targeting victims with social engineering. For one, they're utilizing the vast amounts of information that can be harvested online, says Jon Clay, vice president of threat intelligence for cybersecurity firm Trend Micro.

"The actors investigate their victims using open source intelligence to obtain lots of information about their victim [and] craft very realistic phishing emails to get them to click a URL, open an attachment, or simply do what the email tells them to do, like in the case of business e-mail compromise (BEC) attacks," he says.

The data suggests that attackers are also getting better at analyzing defensive technologies and determining their limitations. To get around systems that detect malicious URLs, for example, cybercriminals are increasingly using dynamic websites that may appear legitimate when an email is sent at 2 a.m., for example, but will present a different site at 8 a.m., when the worker opens the message.

Improvements in Defense

Such techniques not only deceive, but take advantage of asymmetries in defending versus attacking. Scanning every URL sent in an email is not a scalable defense, says Check Point's Friedrich. Running URLs in a full sandbox, analyzing the links to a specific depth, and using image processing to determine sites that are trying to mimic a brand requires a lot of computational power.

	<p>Instead, email security firms are deploying "click-time" analysis to tackle the problem.</p> <p>"There are some algorithms or tests that you can't run on every URL, because the compute is huge, it eventually become price prohibited," he says. "Doing that at click time, we only need to do the tests on the URLs that users actually click on, which is a fraction, so 1% of the total links in e-mail."</p> <p>In addition, defenses increasingly rely on machine learning and artificial intelligence to classify malicious URLs and files in ways that rules-based systems cannot, says Trend Micro's Clay.</p> <p>"Dealing with weaponized attachments can be difficult for those security controls that still rely on signatures only and don't have advanced technologies that can scan the file using ML or a sandbox, both of which could detect many of these malware files," he says.</p> <p>In addition, previous statements from Microsoft have noted that Office 365 includes many of the email protection capabilities discussed by other vendors, including protection from impersonation, visibility into attack campaigns, and using advanced heuristics and machine learning to recognize phishing attacks affecting an entire organization or industry.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Cambodia's cybercrime crisis
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/10/sold-to-gangs-forced-to-run-online-scams-inside-cambodias-cybercrime-crisis
GIST	<p>When the advert popped up on Ly Thi Lan's* Facebook feed, it seemed like the perfect opportunity. An employer in Cambodia was looking for new staff, the only requirement was computer skills, and the salary was generous, especially compared with her factory job in her home country, Vietnam. She would be able to save money, and pay for health treatment she needed. Her husband decided to go as well. "I just wanted to go there to have a better job, earn money to pay for a better life," she says.</p> <p>But when she arrived, she found it wasn't a typical admin job. Her role was to scour the internet for victims she could trick into investing in an online scam. If she refused to do the work, she was told that she would be taken to the eighth floor of the building compound, beaten or electrocuted, she says. Lan was later told by other workers she had been sold to a criminal gang, and that they were now owned by their company. She had no idea how or when this happened, only that she couldn't return home without paying a huge ransom.</p> <p>Lan is just one of thousands of estimated victims who have been trapped in such work in Cambodia, where scam operations proliferated during the pandemic. The issue became so acute that, in August, the US downgraded Cambodia to the worst level possible in its Trafficking In Persons annual report.</p> <p>Prof Vitit Muntarbhorn, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia, who visited Sihanoukville, a city at the centre of such operations, likened conditions in compounds to a "living hell" in his end of mission statement.</p> <p>"We're talking about at least thousands of cases, cumulatively, and less conservative figures could estimate even higher figures," Vitit said of the scale of the trafficking.</p> <p>Cambodia has over recent weeks begun cracking down on such establishments, raiding more than 10 condos and hotels in the capital, Phnom Penh, that were allegedly running illegal online activities, according to VOD English, which has covered the issue. It also reported that almost 1,500 foreign nationals were released during three recent raids in Sihanoukville.</p> <p>Yet observers say such actions are unlikely to eradicate the problem, and that operations will probably move elsewhere. "It's a global issue, they're going to go to Myanmar, they're going to go to other jurisdictions," said Jason Tower, Myanmar country director for the United States Institute of Peace. Such</p>

criminal activities are already thriving in Myanmar, he added, which is in the midst of a deep political crisis prompted by the 2021 military coup, and where there is no effective law enforcement.

Fattening the pig

Cambodia's Sihanoukville was once a sleepy seaside town, but over recent years it has been transformed by Chinese investment into an enclave of casinos and luxury hotels. However, during the pandemic, as tourism was halted, their business and supply of labour from China dried up.

Buildings were adapted for new criminal enterprises, said Surachate Hakparn, assistant national police chief of Royal Thai Police. "Usually they have taken the [hotel] name plate out and built a high wall around it, and on top of the wall there is the spiked fence. Once you are in you can't go out without permission," he said.

Thai police managed to repatriate about 1,300 Thais between last November and March.

Surachate travelled to Sihanoukville in June aiming to rescue more Thai citizens but was hindered by a lack of cooperation from Cambodian authorities. If policing operations are to work, he added, "all police, in every country, [need to be] on the same team".

In recent comments, the prime minister, Hun Sen, appeared to take a tougher stance, saying: "Do not let Cambodia become a haven of crime, a place of money laundering, a place of human trafficking."

Whether the Cambodian authorities will truly change their approach remains to be seen, Surachate said.

The US TIP report cited "endemic corruption" as a barrier to law enforcement. Officials reportedly complicit in various forms of trafficking were not being investigated, it said.

Cambodian officials did not respond to a request for comment.

Pham Nguyen Anh Tuan was stuck in the same compound as Lan, where they were forced to carry out romance-style scams centred around a fake online shop. "We called it 'selling emotions'," he says. He would trawl Facebook Dating for targets. "I'd pretend to be a woman to flirt with guys. After flirting back and forth to create trust in them, I lured them into buying stuff, like a pyramid scheme. The deeper they get sucked in, the worse it'd be for them."

Targets would be told to buy a product, and that they would be refunded with an extra 10% of the price. Initially, for cheaper orders, the scammers would give the promised refund and people would be allowed to keep the money. "When greed and trust in each other grew, they would fall into the trap, they'd buy more stuff at a higher price, we'd 'owe' them, and then we'd stop paying them back."

It's a strategy known as pig butchering – building trust and fattening the target up, before enacting the scam.

The only way to leave the compound was by paying a huge ransom fee, which neither Tuan nor Lan could afford.

"I didn't want to do it, I felt so, so guilty. I did not want to do it," says Lan of the scam work. "But if I didn't make money for the company, the company would beat me, or send me to the eighth floor to electrocute me. Some guys in the company have been electrocuted. We saw it and got really scared."

Lan would work between 14 and 16 hours a day, with only short toilet breaks allowed. Anyone who spent more than 10 minutes in the bathroom was told their pay would be docked. Lunch and dinner were brought to the table where staff worked.

She had been promised a salary of US\$800-900. The first month she received only \$200; by the second and third month she received nothing.

She was told she must earn 300 million dong (\$12,653) for the company each month, and that every five days she must attract two new “customers” to be tricked into sending money. If she didn’t meet her targets her pay would be deducted and the bosses, who were Chinese, threatened her with violence.

The scheme at Lan and Tuan’s compound was designed to trick Vietnamese victims, but similar operations have been targeted at people across the world, from China to the US and Europe.

Jan Santiago, deputy director of the Global Anti-Scam Organization, an initiative created by victims of such scams, says it receives dozens of new cases each week. Most are based in the US, but there are many others across Asia. “I’d say that the average loss from victims in our group is about \$100,000.” Victims are often highly successful professionals: accountants, lawyers and bankers. Many are targeted on dating sites.

“The hallmark of this kind of scam is the initial scammer never really asks for money directly,” says Santiago. Instead, they’re nudging their target to invest on a third party platform. “They really make good use of the gambling psychology and loss aversion of people,” he said. “That’s where the losses really double.”

The opacity of cryptocurrency, combined with a lack of resources among the authorities, means agencies are rarely able to recover money.

Breaking free

Lan managed to escape in August, when her colleagues decided they would try to break free. Their compound was in Koh Thom, Kandal province, on the border, but they feared that if they were sold to another gang, they might be moved further away to Sihanoukville, where escaping would be impossible. Tuan says he had already been sold multiple times between criminal gangs. Often, if someone is unable to meet the targets set by the bosses, they will be sold on to another operation.

Together, dozens of colleagues enacted a plan to escape. Some male staff fired molotov cocktails to startle their work compound’s security officers, then dozens raced from the building. Men in dark uniforms chased frantically after them, waving sticks. Lan, Tuan and others jumped into the water of the Binh Di river along the Cambodia-Vietnam border and swam for their lives, a moment that was captured on video and has since been shared widely online.

The water is 70 metres at its most narrow point, and Lan can barely swim. “When I was about to sink, my husband grabbed my arm to swim and took me further away from the bank.” Eventually, someone from the Vietnamese side raced over with a motorboat to rescue them.

A 16-year-old boy did not make it, and drowned along the way. Another man, who couldn’t swim, was caught, beaten and dragged backwards, says Lan, who is now home. “The guard came down to pull him up, then hit him on the head and in the back or stomach or something with an iron stick. I saw it with my own eyes. I was terrified,” she recalls. The image of him being beaten continued to haunt her, even after her return to Vietnam.

The man was eventually rescued, she heard.

Those who do manage to return home can face stigma and legal charges. In Thailand, the majority of people who have returned from such compounds, about 70%, have been prosecuted, according to Surachate.

Jacob Sims, director of International Justice Mission Cambodia, said countries need to develop strong systems to identify victims, and make sure they are supported. “Some scammers are there generally under their own volition as members of large organised crime networks. Others are experiencing confinement and extreme abuse. Many fall somewhere in the middle. Forced criminality is a complex issue,” he said.

	<p>It's unclear how many more people are yet to return from Cambodia. Thailand believes about 3,000 more of its citizens remain.</p> <p>Adverts offering suspicious looking admin jobs in Cambodia, meanwhile, continue to appear online.</p> <p>"If someone approaches me now and says there's a light job with good pay, I'll put that person to the front page of any newspaper, report them. Because there's no such thing as light job easy money," Lan says.</p> <p>"I've been through it myself."</p> <p>* Names have been changed</p>
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HEADLINE	10/08 BBB: scammers target mid-term elections
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/money/scam-midterm-elections-personal-information-bbb/281-415dc073-6a09-441b-bba3-ad4b861887c0
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Midterm elections are a month away - Tuesday, Nov. 8 - and it's likely you are receiving more mail from candidates, emails, texts or phone calls, all vying for your vote.</p> <p>According to the Better Business Bureau of Washington, scammers are preying on emotion and people's passion to support their political party and their choice candidates.</p> <p>"The more people care, the more vulnerable they can be," according to Logan Hickle, communications director for the BBB of Washington.</p> <p>Hickle said scammers know how to use polarizing issues to play on people's emotions when sending out fake polls or donation requests.</p> <p>Email is one of the prime ways scammers try to hook victims, build trust and then steal personal information and money.</p> <p>Phishing emails might include a link that takes users to a spoofed version of a candidate's website or installs malware on your device. For more information from the BBB on how to spot email scams, click here.</p> <p>"Scams via text messaging are increasing," said Hickle about "smishing" scam attempts.</p> <p>Smishing is similar to email scamming, only messages are sent via text.</p> <p>You might receive a message that looks like it came from a trusted source, inviting you to participate in a poll or make a donation. The BBB said tricksters might be out to get your passwords, account numbers, social security number or other data. The BBB has tips on how to identify a fake text message.</p> <p>Scammers will also try to mimic actual campaign calls and pollster phone calls.</p> <p>The BBB said criminals will pretend to be affiliated with your party or candidate in an effort to get your personal information. It's common for actual candidates to use pre-recorded messages to reach out to the public, but the BBB said scammers sometimes use voice cloning to make it sound like an authentic message from a candidate and persuade people to donate or share info. After hearing the message, people are redirected or transferred to someone ready to take down their information and use it for nefarious activities.</p> <p>Scammers may also be calling to conduct a fake survey, get you to donate funds or register to vote.</p> <p>If you want to donate to your preferred candidate - the BBB recommends you open a browser on your own computer and device and go to the official website.</p>

HEADLINE	10/08 Frustration: VMFH network system outages
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/seattle-area-patients-frustrated-by-days-of-system-outages-at-virginia-mason-franciscan-health-facilities/
GIST	<p>Shaun D'Sylva was trying to get a handle on his stepfather's medical care this past week by logging in to MyChart, a patient portal used by medical providers for users to track appointments, test results, medications and other health records.</p> <p>The website wouldn't load. The Virginia Mason Franciscan Health phone helpline was a busy signal. He called the main line, explaining he was trying to get to MyChart, to which the operator responded "we are having problems."</p> <p>For days, D'Sylva has had to go offline to coordinate all care in Enumclaw for his stepfather, who has esophageal cancer. A question that would normally be answered in an email requires calling six or seven people. A network of appointments have to be scheduled separately. His stepfather's full list of medications is stuck in the downed system.</p> <p>Hospital-wide system outages, stemming from an IT security issue reported by Virginia Mason Franciscan Health's parent company, have led to several days of disruptions for patients and providers at VMFH facilities throughout Puget Sound, with no estimated restoration date. Along with outages of the MyChart system, appointments were canceled or rescheduled, some with no notice because schedulers couldn't look up patients' contact information in a database.</p> <p>CommonSpirit Health, the company affiliated with 10 VMFH hospitals throughout the Puget Sound region, said it has identified the security issue but hasn't provided additional details on who or what may have caused the issue.</p> <p>CommonSpirit Health has 140 hospitals in 21 states and was created in 2019 when Catholic Health Initiatives and Dignity Health merged, according to its website. It's unclear how many facilities have been affected, though several have reported disruptions. In Iowa, ambulances were diverted from MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center's emergency department because of a system shutdown.</p> <p>Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle and Virginia Mason regional medical centers are not affected, VMFH said, adding that hospitals remain open and anyone experiencing an emergency should seek medical attention immediately.</p> <p>In a statement, VMFH said it had taken "certain IT systems" offline as a precautionary step, which could include electronic health record systems. It didn't provide additional details about which systems might be affected.</p> <p>VMFH said in a statement that facilities are following protocols for system outages and taking steps to minimize the disruption, adding that it takes seriously its responsibility to ensure patient privacy and IT security.</p> <p>"We recognize this is a frustrating time for our patients and staff and appreciate everyone's patience as we work around the clock to resolve this issue as quickly as possible," VMFH said in the statement. "We can't thank our heroic staff enough for their hard work and dedication to continue caring for our patients during this difficult time."</p> <p>D'Sylva said he was frustrated that he hadn't heard from his stepfather's medical providers in Enumclaw and Tacoma's St. Joseph Medical Center about the outages, even though he has long been encouraged to use the patient portal.</p> <p>"It's nice to have a single portal, it's really, really helpful, it makes it really efficient," he said. "But now I realize I need to be able to download these records and have it. It's one of those things where I understand</p>

that IT problems happen, but we've had a major outage and they haven't said anything. I find that appalling for a health care provider."

On Monday, J.D. Wilson arrived at a Federal Way clinic associated with St. Francis Hospital and, he said, was told no one there was accepting patients because the system was down. The front-desk manager said they weren't able to let anyone know ahead of time, because their contact information was in the same database they couldn't access.

"I said 'you don't have a paper copy or something?'" said Wilson, who lives in Covington. They told him they weren't allowed to because of privacy concerns, according to Wilson.

Wilson said he was seeing a doctor for a reason that's not life threatening, so he was OK with having a later appointment. But he hasn't heard from the clinic since then.

"You have to think that there are some people who really need to see a doctor, and the doctor not having records to look at, or to document the visit," he said.

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Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	10/10 ISIS-linked militants threaten Mozambique
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/10/africa/isis-mozambique-gas-reserves-cmd-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Asmani Dadi had heard rumors about the insurgents. Then, one day, they came true.</p> <p>It was July 2020 and Dadi was a student in the town of Mocímboa da Praia, northern Mozambique.</p> <p>"They came ... from the forest and began to kill people. When they found children, ... they stole them back to the forest. And when they find men... they cut off their heads," Dadi recalled.</p> <p>The attack was just one in a festering insurgency by ISIS-linked militants in the southern African nation that has killed at least 4000 civilians and displaced nearly one million people, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR.</p> <p>"They first arrived in this area to spread their propaganda. To say they were Muslim men. But Muslim men should not kill like this," said Dadi.</p> <p>Rich natural resource</p> <p>Mozambique has huge natural gas reserves – a resource that, if exploited effectively, could change its fortunes and help the world as it struggles to find enough natural gas to heat homes and fuel industry following Russia's war on Ukraine. The insurgency, however, jeopardizes Mozambique's entire economic future, and the battle against the militants is now international.</p> <p>Soldiers and military personnel from 10 nations are combating the fighters. Among them are Rwandan forces that have now largely regained control of a portion of Mozambique's northernmost Cabo Delgado province, which is home to Palma and Mocímboa da Praia.</p> <p>Whether Mozambique and its allies can stamp out the insurgency altogether is a question that has global repercussions as countries hunt for new sources of liquefied natural gas (LNG).</p> <p>Mozambique is one of the poorest nations on earth but its offshore riches could make it one of the richest countries in the region. In early 2010, an enormous gas field was discovered in the Rovuma basin, near Mozambique's border with Tanzania.</p>

With already more than [100 trillion cubic feet](#) of proven offshore natural gas reserves, one industry insider likened its future potential equal to Russia – a natural gas giant.

As the European Union attempts to wean itself off Russian LNG after President Vladimir Putin's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, the need for future sources from non-aligned countries like Mozambique is critical, says Paul Eardley-Taylor, director of Oil & Gas, Southern Africa at Standard Bank.

“Mozambique is important as it's a very large find; has low CO2 gas; is an ideal geography for Southeast Asia but can also service Europe and East Asia,” he said.

Many industry experts see LNG as an ideal transition fuel as countries move from coal to renewable energy to combat climate change, though some climate activists believe that the transition should skip LNG entirely because even as a cleaner source of fuel, it does contribute to global warming.

In practical terms, the world will depend on LNG supply in the foreseeable future. And the war in Ukraine has rattled expectations of both price and supply.

“Gas prices are upwards of anywhere to eight times what they were before the invasion of Ukraine. Not just prices, but the availability of supply. The ability for the world markets to have more gas available – especially LNG – is huge,” said a senior US State Department diplomat who closely watches Mozambique.

After the find, major oil suppliers such as TotalEnergies, ExxonMobil, and others flooded in.

Mozambique faced a radical transformation; the government promised human development would be at the center of its strategy. But without much delay, [several officials became embroiled](#) in a corruption scandal worth billions of dollars.

But a far more deadly threat was brewing.

The making of ISIS-Mozambique

On the ridge above Mocímboa da Praia, the market stalls are just burnt-out husks, evidence of the battle to retake the town from the ISIS-linked fighters.

They held Mocímboa for a year until Rwandan forces pushed them out. But the earliest known insurgent attacks in the country occurred in late 2017.

At first, small groups of men struck with clubs and machetes. They seemed to capture weapons from the Mozambican police and military at will. Machetes became AK-47s; AK-47s became RPGs and grenades. The group began calling for followers online and started attacking bigger towns. Their awful signature became beheading security forces and civilians to sow terror.

Known as Ansar al-Sunnah wa al Jamma'ah, or Shabaab (no connection to the Somali group of the same name), in 2021 the US State Department branded the militants as ISIS-Mozambique.

Their motivations, organizational structure, and leadership remain opaque.

“It is really important to emphasize how little is known. And the intelligence deficit has been a central challenge for the government and security forces in dealing with this insurgency,” said Piers Pigou, a senior consultant for Southern Africa at the International Crisis Group (ICG).

In March last year, the militants staged one of their most [brazen attacks](#) and overran the town of Palma in Cabo Delgado, leaving behind a trail of bodies, some beheaded.

Few security analysts publicly believed a successful attack was possible, as a substantial force of Mozambican military was posted in the area.

The militants had activated sleeper cells in the economic hub, however, and attacked from three different directions.

During the raid, ISIS-Mozambique destroyed a cell tower to cut communications and beheaded several truck drivers on the routes into Palma, robbing banks and looting stores as they went.

The Mozambican forces, as had happened multiple times in smaller towns, were unable to stop them. Many Mozambican and foreign workers sought refuge in the Amarula hotel.

Over the space of several days, a [South African mercenary group](#) evacuated some of them. Others set up a convoy to make a desperate escape. They were ambushed on their way out.

Scores were killed in the Palma attack and thousands displaced, many scrambling onto boats to get to Pemba, the regional capital. Government forces eventually regained control. But people were too scared to come back.

The attack had devastating economic consequences. [TotalEnergies declared](#) force majeure (a case of unforeseeable circumstances that prevent it from fulfilling a contract) and shut down its vast Afungi gas development nearby.

The Mozambican government, long accused of downplaying the insurgency, faced the very real prospect of losing both its economic future and the entire province of Cabo Delgado to ISIS-Mozambique.

The Mozambican government did not reply to requests for comment on this story.

An unlikely savior

The Mozambican military and police had struggled to combat the insurgents from the very start. Despite a brutal civil war after independence in 1975, or perhaps because of it, their forces have appeared demotivated and undersupplied according to multiple outside observers.

But foreign forces from nearby countries have now stepped in.

Standing amongst the perfect rows of prefabricated housing on the Afungi site is Brig. Gen. Ronald Rwivanga, of the Rwandan Defence Force. With him are a group of journalists, including CNN, embedded with the Rwandan forces in a rare opportunity to get into Cabo Delgado.

“The first stage will be to show the population that you have militarily defeated the insurgents. The next step should be to rebuild lives. To ensure that everybody feels that sense of security. And that requires you to be present. The forces have to be there,” Rwivanga told CNN.

Rwandan military and police have secured a large swath of land between Palma and Mocímboa da Praia and into the interior. Southern African forces, as part of a regional block deployment, are tasked with other zones.

They eventually got here after a series of half-measures and failed solutions.

The EU has given substantial financial backing, and the United States and the European bloc have supplied training, but the outcomes are still spotty.

In a bid to stamp out the insurgency, the Mozambican government looked to the outside, first hiring the notorious Wagner Group, Russian mercenaries with links to the Kremlin.

It later engaged the Dyke Advisory Group (DAG), a small mercenary operation led by Lionel Dyck, a former colonel in the Zimbabwe military.

In the wake of the attack on Palma and the halting of Mozambique's gas potential, the Mozambican government needed to find a solution quickly.

The answer came from Paul Kagame, long-time president of Rwanda and, famously, former military commander. At the invitation of Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi, Rwanda dispatched frontline forces and specialized police to Cabo Delgado in July 2021.

Their progress was swift as they attacked major insurgent-controlled towns and base camps, retaking Mocímboa in August 2021.

'I heard there is peace now'

A year on, the Rwandan officers are at pains to show that their area of control is returning to normalcy.

There is some evidence of that. On the roads leading into their former villages, trucks, and buses laden with the belongings of returning people stream steadily by.

"They were burning houses, killing people everywhere. I was with my family when I saw them doing it, so we had to run," said Benjamin Thomas, who is sitting in the back of a white truck, as the passengers pass around a bottle of water in the stifling heat, "I heard there is peace now, so I came home."

Thomas and others said they came back to find what was left and to escape what they say are terrible conditions in the sprawling camps for the displaced to the south of Mozambique.

Schools are still closed in much of the region after teachers and administrators fled, and health care, neglected even before the insurgency, is sorely lacking.

Some human rights activists are suspicious that just enough is being done for the gas projects to restart without a public relations backlash.

"There is a prioritization of optics for the world to see that these areas are fine and therefore investment should come, rather than a prioritization of basic conditions for people to go back," said Zenaida Machado, a senior researcher for Human Rights Watch.

"Being surrounded by soldiers is not normalcy," she told CNN.

It is a sensitive topic for TotalEnergies and at Afungi their representatives were not authorized to speak.

"The situation is getting better, but the restart of our project in Afungi is conditional on the restoration of security in a sustainable way in northern Cabo Delgado and the normalization of the situation with regard to the local population," a TotalEnergies representative said in a written statement to questions from CNN.

A spokesperson for Eni, the Italian energy company, confirmed to CNN that a separate LNG development of an offshore floating LNG ship [called Coral Sul began LNG production](#) this year and its first cargo is expected this quarter.

But the situation on land, in much of the province and beyond, is still very volatile.

It is unfortunately a kind of whack-a-mole approach. If you hit them here, they pop up there," said Pigou of ICG.

Together with his team, Pigou has been tracking multiple recent incidents, including deadly attacks and beheadings, mostly outside of the Rwandan zone of control.

There is also growing evidence of closer ties to ISIS in the Middle East and the move towards terror tactics like improvised explosive devices, say Pigou and Joe van Der Walt, CEO of Focus Group, a South African risk management company.

	<p>“The security situation has changed, and the dynamics have changed, but the insurgents themselves have demonstrated a propensity for adaptation and survival,” said the senior State Department diplomat, adding that ISIS-Mozambique is still actively recruiting and training inside the province and beyond.</p> <p>They stress that developing the region, giving people something to hope for, is the key to extinguishing the threat of ISIS-Mozambique before it takes the well-trodden path of insurgencies in other regions of the continent like the Sahel and Somalia.</p> <p>Most agree that the window to stamp out the insurgency is narrow.</p> <p>“The first thing about dealing with an insurgency is that you must deal with the root causes of the insurgency. Of course, the very first thing you must do is defeat the insurgents in a military operation, but after that, you must try to win hearts and minds,” said Rwivanga.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 Annihilation of Hazaras in Afghanistan
SOURCE	https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/10/09/annihilation-of-hazaras-the-state-sponsored-jihad-in-afghanistan/
GIST	<p>The world remained a mute spectator when the Taliban took over Kabul without firing a single shot. The NATO troops were busy leaving the war-torn-nation, unbothered by the loss in the advancement that they made after two decades of war on the terrorists. International news channels went one step ahead and started normalising the ‘fighters’ playing in the park and flipping pages of books in a library. A large number of helicopters, machine guns, rocket launchers and advanced weaponries were left over by the withdrawing western forces which were inherited by the Taliban. The Taliban was supposed to respect international conventions and treat all the Afghan nationals as equals, but everything is back to square one- the Islamist organisation has launched a Jihad against the members of Hazara community.</p> <p>Hazaras are the ethnic minorities in Afghanistan who follow Shi’ite Islam and are roughly ten percentage of the total population. They have a history of being persecuted by the majority Pashtuns in Afghanistan due to which many of them fled to Balochistan and Khorasan in the first half of 20th century. They were systematically targeted during the first Taliban regime (1996-2001) when Taliban terrorists went from door to door to murder Hazara men and enslave their women. After the fall of the Taliban regime, their condition improved but attacks on the community continued to occur. In 2011, attack by suicide bombers on the day of Ashura killed 59 Shi’ites in Kabul and four in Mazar-e-Sharif. In November 2015, Taliban butchered seven Hazara travellers in the Zabul province and in November 2018, Hazaras in Jaghari and Malistan were selectively targeted and were killed. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded that more than 500 Hazara civilians were killed in various attacks by the terrorists in 2021 alone.</p> <p>In a recent suicide attack targeting the Hazaras, 53 people were killed including 46 girls and young women and 110 people were injured in the Hazara quarter of Kabul city. Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP), an offshoot of IS, claimed responsibility for the attack. The Taliban government’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs was quick to condemn the attack by saying, “The Islamic Emirate does not believe in the religious, ethnic, or political divide of Afghan nationals and considers itself accountable for the lives of all Afghans.” At the same time the ‘Taliban police’ brutally assaulted women who protested against the attack on students and demanded justice for the victims. This is not the first time that ISKP is targeting the Hazara community, but the state (read Taliban) has turned a blind eye towards them. There is also an allegation that the Taliban is using its own proxies to carry out large scale attack on the Hazara population.</p> <p>Ever since its re-entry to the throne in Kabul, Taliban had been sending strong warnings to Afghan’s Hazara population. The statue of Hazara leader Abdul Ali Mazari in Bamiyan was destroyed by the Taliban within days of coming to power. Mazari was murdered by the Taliban in 1995 and his body was mutilated and thrown from a helicopter in Ghazni. In the district of Balkhab, Hazara civilians were ruthlessly attacked and killed by the Taliban when their commander Mehdi Mujahid, who was himself a Hazara rebelled against them. Mehdi was killed by the Taliban along with 200 fellow fighters and around 27,000 Hazaras were displaced in the conflict.</p>

	<p>The entire governance structure of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is deprived of Hazaras at the top position. Even in the Hazara majority districts of Bamiyan, Ghazni and Daikundi, the Taliban has appointed hardliner-Sunni Islamists as its Governors. Similarly, Hazaras are also removed from civil and government services without giving any reasons in almost all the provinces. This shows that the Taliban has not moved a bit from its perception on the Hazara minority.</p> <p>Conclusion</p> <p>The Taliban is transforming Afghanistan to a state exclusively for 'Male Pashtuns'. The handful of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs who were left in the nation are given long term visas and are brought to India by the Central government. The women irrespective of their community identity are granted only secondary status and are now deprived of education, healthcare, job opportunities and a free life. The ethnic minorities including Hazaras, Uzbeks, Aimak and others are being persecuted by the Taliban regime.</p> <p>Even when human rights violations are reported on a massive scale in Afghanistan, more nations are coming forward to do business with the government led by Taliban. But this time, unlike their first term, Taliban is handling the situation in a way that the global community cannot blame it directly for the attacks on Hazaras and other minorities.</p> <p>All the little advancement that the Hazara community could make from 2001-2021 are now being annulled by the Islamic Emirate. The community members are being eliminated throughout the country and this is nothing but a state sponsored pogrom happening against the largest group of 'infidels' in Afghanistan.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 Why US freed infamous Afghan drug lord?
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/why-america-released-bashir-noorzai-the-pablo-escobar-of-afghanistan?ref=home
GIST	<p>When the U.S. announced the release of American hostage Mark Frerichs—a navy veteran who has been held by the Taliban since 2020—it failed to mention that he was released in exchange for a convicted Afghan drug trafficker and prominent Taliban ally, Bashir Noorzai.</p> <p>“After more than two years in captivity... Frerichs is safe and on his way home from Afghanistan... Mark’s return to his loved ones is the result of intense engagement with the Taliban,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last week.</p> <p>Halfway across the world in Afghanistan, the Taliban were also congratulating themselves for securing the release of Noorzai. Many Taliban leaders and fighters flocked to the Kabul airport carrying colorful garlands to welcome him.</p> <p>Often dubbed the “Pablo Escobar of Afghanistan,” Noorzai is a notorious drug lord from the southern Afghan province of Kandahar. He was the earliest financier of the Taliban in the 1990s, fueling the group’s insurgency with funds from his illicit narcotic trades.</p> <p>“You can’t imagine the importance of this man within the Taliban,” former Afghan security official Ahmad Shuja Jamal told The Daily Beast.</p> <p>Now, his release after more than a decade has Afghan experts and political stakeholders guessing if the U.S. is leaving the door open for establishing ties with the Taliban.</p> <p>“He is very influential within the Taliban, but particularly within the Noorzai tribe where most of the Taliban leadership come from,” former Afghan spy chief Rahmatullah Nabil told The Daily Beast, adding that as one of the “founding father of the Taliban,” Noorzai wields considerable influence over senior leaders like Mullah Haibatullah, the current leader of the Taliban.</p>

“In the past, he was an intermediary between Taliban leaders and the Americans in 2001. I suspect even now his release is conditional to a deal with the Americans,” Nabil said. “He is someone who can influence the Taliban to bring about desired changes, those that the international community wants to see. He could be the U.S.’s man inside the Taliban.”

According to Noorzai’s lawyer, the former drug lord had cooperated with the U.S. before his arrest, and once “handed over 15 truckloads of weapons, including about 400 anti aircraft missiles that had been hidden by the Taliban in his tribe’s territory.”

Speaking at his own grand welcome in Kabul, Noorzai said he hoped his release would improve relations with the U.S. “I hope this exchange can lead to peace between Afghanistan and America, because an American was released and I am also free now,” he said.

Aside from his political influence, Noorzai brings the promise of financial relief through his drug trade to a flailing Taliban leadership, which has been running the country on fumes left behind after the fall of the previous government.

“In the last one year, the Taliban have come to realize that it is difficult to run a government and not as easy as running a guerrilla war fuelled by drug trafficking and black marketing funds,” a former Afghan security official familiar with counternarcotics efforts under in the previous government told The Daily Beast.

While outwardly, the Taliban has banned opium cultivation and trade in Afghanistan, the illicit drug trade has in fact continued to grow. Afghanistan’s opium production, contributing to over 80 percent of the global supply, now covers 263,000 hectares of land—three times more than in 2001, when the U.S. invaded the country.

The Taliban have been less than forthcoming with experts wanting to quantify the problem, but recent satellite imagery revealed that the Taliban have felled native pomegranate farms to replace them with opium fields. Similarly, images show that a prime narcotic trading hub—the Abdul Wadood market, has also expanded.

Noorzai’s return to Afghanistan will only fuel this problem, the security official said.

“Noorzai isn’t the first drug smuggler the US [had] released; about 50 other drug traffickers were released after the Doha deal, but he is certainly the most prominent,” the official said. “All of them [released prisoners] have gone back to their narcotic business again, as will Noorzai. The Taliban continue to depend on drug trafficking and smuggling to sustain themselves financially.”

While the Taliban has been seeking recognition from the international government and the lifting of sanctions on their members, they have not only continued to breach agreements of the Doha deal, but have also been committing large-scale human rights violations. Most recently, Al Zawahiri, the Al Qaeda chief, was targeted by a U.S. drone in the heart of Kabul, contrary to the Taliban claims that they have severed ties with the militant organization responsible for the 9/11 attacks.

Nabil speculated that whether Noorzai returns to the narcotic trade will depend on the political responsibility he is given, not just by the Taliban, but also the U.S.

“He may not return to narco-trade openly if he has struck a deal with the American to be the go-between with the Taliban, perhaps even their de facto ruler,” he said. “I believe then he might seek to consolidate his power politically, perhaps even assume the role of the de facto leader of the Taliban.”

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HEADLINE	10/09 US holds in-person meeting with Taliban
SOURCE	https://theprint.in/world/top-us-officials-hold-first-in-person-meeting-with-taliban-after-al-zawahiris-killing-report/1160090/

GIST	<p>Washington [US], October 9 (ANI): More than two months after the killing of al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul, top US officials met with the Taliban on Saturday.</p> <p>This is the first in-person meeting between the two sides following the drone strike in July this year that led to the killing of al-Zawahiri, CNN reported citing two officials familiar with the talks.</p> <p>The key Biden administration included the CIA's deputy director David Cohen and the State Department's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Tom West. Whereas the Taliban delegation was represented by the head of intelligence Abdul Haq Wasiq.</p> <p>The presence of the CIA Deputy Director and the Taliban intelligence head at the meeting signals an emphasis on counterterrorism, the American broadcaster said. This comes after the White House last month called cooperation with the Taliban on counterterrorism "a work in progress," according to CNN.</p> <p>In the months after the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan, the Islamic State-Khorasan (ISIS-K) has managed to expand its reach to nearly all of Afghanistan's provinces. The terrorist group has also stepped up the tempo of its attacks, carrying out suicide bombings, ambushes and assassinations.</p> <p>"The Taliban are struggling to prevent ISIS-K attacks, making them look feckless, particularly in Kabul," Beth Sanner, a former Deputy Director of National Intelligence, was quoted as saying by CNN.</p> <p>"[Cohen] is likely to deliver a firm message that we will conduct more strikes as we did against Zawahiri if we find that al Qaeda members in Afghanistan are supporting operations that threaten the US or its allies," he added. "ISIS-K now poses an internal Afghan threat, to the Taliban and to sectarian stability given ISIS-K's focus on killing Shias, but there is some reasonable concern that ISIS-K could ultimately turn its sights on external plotting if the Taliban is unable to contain them."</p> <p>Last month, the United Nations raised growing security concerns in Afghanistan while highlighting worrisome trends witnessed in recent months, particularly the continuing presence of foreign terrorist groups in the country.</p> <p>The concerns were raised in the latest quarterly Afghanistan report of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to the Security Council.</p> <p>"The security situation reveals a worrisome trend in recent months, particularly the series of attacks by ISIL-K, recurring armed opposition clashes with Taliban de facto security forces and the continuing presence of foreign terrorist groups in Afghanistan," the report said.</p> <p>It said the Taliban's commitment to ensuring that no group or individual will use the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of other countries must be sustained through concrete actions. (ANI)</p>
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HEADLINE	10/08 Morocco: proliferation of terrorism in Africa
SOURCE	https://northafricapost.com/61515-au-peace-security-council-morocco-sounds-the-alarm-over-proliferation-of-terrorist-acts-in-africa.html
GIST	<p>Morocco has sounded the alarm over the proliferation of terrorist acts in Africa, which counts 19 separatist movements, and which is the second region of the world where terrorism strikes most often and, above all, indiscriminately.</p> <p>This came in the address delivered Friday by Moroccan Foreign Minister, Nasser Bourita, during the ministerial meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council, the first held under Moroccan chairmanship during the month of October.</p> <p>Bourita, who was chairing the session via videoconference from Rabat, renewed the Kingdom's commitment to put its experience in the fight against terrorism at the service of peace, especially in Africa</p>

where terrorist acts are proliferating. Africa counts 19 separatist movements, and is the second region of the world where terrorism strikes most often and, above all, indiscriminately.

Morocco is committed to promoting South-South, North-South and triangular solidarity cooperation, in order to address the complex and transnational nature of the terrorist threat in Africa, he said, adding that this commitment is reflected first by the Kingdom's accession to several sub-regional cooperation frameworks aimed at strengthening the collective capacity of African countries to protect their borders from transnational threats.

During this ministerial meeting on development and de-radicalization as levers in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, he also referred to the efforts of the Kingdom in the field of de-radicalization, including through the establishment of specialized institutions to train African Imams, like the Foundation Mohammed VI of African Ulema "which is established as a real platform for exchange and sharing to address the misinterpretation of religious texts and messages."

Bourita also noted that the Kingdom is committed to promoting and defending African security concerns in the international agenda, including during his three consecutive terms as co-chair of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) and his co-chairmanship of the Africa Focus Group of the Global Coalition against ISIS.

With 48% of the victims of terrorism in the world are African, 7,234 terrorist attacks that have claimed the lives of 28,960 victims in 2021 and 27 terrorist groups listed on the UN sanctions list, Africa is experiencing "an unprecedented proliferation of terrorist groups," said Bourita, noting that the economic impact of terrorism in Africa over the past 10 years has amounted to 171 billion dollars.

The Sahel-Saharan region has become in a decade the second region of the world most affected by terrorism, the government official said noting that "this bleak picture should challenge us on the need to adopt a holistic approach that devotes more effort to the underlying factors fueling the proliferation of radicalization and terrorism on our continent.

Among these factors, Bourita cited "the latent multiplication" of separatist groups that "is now established as a real catalyst for political and security instability on the continent, by allying themselves with, or even absorbing, the agendas and modus operandi of terrorist and criminal entities.

To dry up the sources of the terrorist threat, Morocco advocates, among other things, the establishment of a platform for collaboration between Member States for the exchange of expertise in de-radicalization and the establishment of a development fund dedicated to financing African collective action in socio-economic and human development, said Bourita.

The meeting was marked by 12 interventions from member countries knowing that the Peace and Security Council of the African Union has 15 members.

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HEADLINE	10/08 Failed rocket attack targeted troops in Syria
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-says-failed-rocket-attack-targeted-american-troops-syria-2022-10-09/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, Oct 8 (Reuters) - The U.S. military said late on Saturday that unidentified forces fired a rocket at a compound in Syria hosting U.S. troops and partnered local forces, but failed to cause any injuries or damage.</p> <p>The military, in a short statement, said the 107 mm rocket failed to impact anything inside the Rumalyn Landing Zone U.S. compound in northeast Syria.</p> <p>"Additional rockets were found at the launch site," said the U.S. military's Central Command, which oversees U.S. troops in the Middle East.</p>

	<p>Central Command did not say who it believed might be responsible for the failed attack.</p> <p>It came just two days after a rare U.S. helicopter raid on a government-held village in Syria's northeast killed an Islamic State militant on Thursday, followed hours later by a separate U.S. air strike later that killed two other militants.</p> <p>U.S. forces first deployed into Syria during the Obama administration's campaign against Islamic State, partnering with a Kurdish-led group called the Syrian Democratic Forces. There are about 900 U.S. troops in Syria, most of them in the east.</p> <p>Still, Washington has blamed Iran-backed militias for attacks on American troops in recent months. Those Iran-backed forces established a foothold in Syria while fighting in support of President Bashar al-Assad during Syria's civil war.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 Somalia govt bans al-Shabab 'propaganda'
SOURCE	https://www.africanews.com/2022/10/09/somalia-govt-bans-al-shabaab-propaganda-contents/
GIST	<p>In the fight against terrorism in general and the Al-Shabab extremist group in particular, the Somali government has decided to enforce a new measure.</p> <p>On Saturday (Oct.7), the deputy minister of information announced the government banned what it calls "the dissemination of extremism ideology messages both from official media houses and on social media".</p> <p>"I want to inform the Somali media and all Somali people in general that we'll regard all al Shabaab related propaganda coverage including their terrorist acts and their ideology as punishable crimes, Abdirahman Yusuf said.</p> <p>"Thus, implementing its decision, the government started cyber operations fighting against terrorist accounts on social media, so far, we have suspended more than 40 accounts on Facebook and Twitter", the deputy minister added.</p> <p>Speaking the AFP news agency, Yusuf insisted the decision would not affect normal news coverage about al-Shabab by journalists in Somalia.</p> <p>The armed forces, backed by local militias and international allies, have waged a campaign against the al-Qaeda-linked group which still controls swaths of the countryside.</p> <p>Earlier this week, the jihadists carried out a deadly triple bombing.</p> <p>The ministry of information, in a statement, urged Somalis to report accounts linked to terrorist activities.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	10/11 New Zealand proposes: tax cow burps
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/farmers-condemn-new-zealands-proposed-tax-on-animal-burps/
GIST	<p>WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand's government on Tuesday proposed taxing the greenhouse gasses that farm animals make from burping and peeing as part of a plan to tackle climate change.</p> <p>The government said the farm levy would be a world first, and that farmers should be able to recoup the cost by charging more for climate-friendly products.</p>

But farmers quickly condemned the plan. Federated Farmers, the industry's main lobby group, said the plan would "rip the guts out of small-town New Zealand" and see farms replaced with trees.

Federated Farmers President Andrew Hoggard said farmers had been trying to work with the government for more than two years on an emissions reduction plan that wouldn't decrease food production.

"Our plan was to keep farmers farming," Hoggard said. Instead, he said farmers would be selling their farms "so fast you won't even hear the dogs barking on the back of the ute (pickup truck) as they drive off."

Opposition lawmakers from the conservative ACT Party said the plan would actually increase worldwide emissions by moving farming to other countries that were less efficient at making food.

New Zealand's farming industry is vital to its economy. Dairy products, including those used to make infant formula in China, are the nation's largest export earner.

There are just 5 million people in New Zealand but some 10 million beef and dairy cattle and 26 million sheep.

The outsized industry has made New Zealand unusual in that about half of its greenhouse gas emissions come from farms. Farm animals produce gasses that warm the planet, particularly methane from cattle burps and nitrous oxide from their urine.

The debate in New Zealand is part of a broader global reckoning about farming's impact on the environment and the steps some say are needed for mitigation.

In the Netherlands, farmers have dumped hay bales on roads and driven tractors along busy highways to protest government proposals to slash emissions of damaging pollutants.

In New Zealand, the government has pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make the country carbon neutral by 2050. Part of that plan includes a pledge that it will reduce methane emissions from farm animals by 10% by 2030 and by up to 47% by 2050.

Under the government's proposed plan, farmers would start to pay for emissions in 2025, with the pricing yet to be finalized.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said all the money collected from the proposed farm levy would be put back into the industry to fund new technology, research and incentive payments for farmers.

"New Zealand's farmers are set to be the first in the world to reduce agricultural emissions, positioning our biggest export market for the competitive advantage that brings in a world increasingly discerning about the provenance of their food," Ardern said.

Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor said it was an exciting opportunity for New Zealand and its farmers.

"Farmers are already experiencing the impact of climate change with more regular drought and flooding," O'Connor said. "Taking the lead on agricultural emissions is both good for the environment and our economy."

The liberal Labour government's proposal harks back to a similar but unsuccessful proposal made by a previous Labour government in 2003 to tax farm animals for their methane emissions.

	<p>Farmers back then also vehemently opposed the idea, and political opponents ridiculed it as a “fart tax” — although a “burp tax” would have been more technically accurate as most of the methane emissions come from belching. The government eventually abandoned the plan.</p> <p>According to opinion polls, Ardern’s Labour Party has slipped in popularity and fallen behind the main opposition National Party since Ardern won a second term in 2020 in a landslide victory of historic proportions.</p> <p>If Ardern’s government can’t find agreement on the proposal with farmers, who have considerable political sway in New Zealand, it’s likely to make it more difficult for Ardern to win reelection next year when the nation goes back to the polls.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Calif. lake WWII ‘ghost boat’ mystery
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/10/lake-shasta-drought-ghost-boat
GIST	<p>Waning water levels across the west – symptoms of the region’s record drought – have revealed yet another artifact.</p> <p>Dubbed the “Ghost Boat” by officials, the rusted carcass of a second world war Higgins boat, used to transport troops into battle and on to beaches overseas, began to emerge from the shallows in Lake Shasta last fall. Levels have sunk low enough this year to excavate the craft fully.</p> <p>But how it ended up in California’s largest reservoir, buried in the depths for decades, is uncertain.</p> <p>“The circumstance of its sinking remains a mystery,” US Forest Service officials with Shasta-Trinity national forest wrote in a Sunday morning Facebook post, including photos of the historic find perched atop dried cracked earth of the desiccated lakebed. Numbers painted along the boat’s ramp show that it was once assigned to the Attack Transport USS Monrovia, used as General George Patton’s headquarters in the Sicilian occupation in 1943.</p> <p>“Eisenhower also was on this ship at that time, and it went on to a further six D-Day invasions in the Pacific,” officials said in the post, noting that it was reportedly used in the invasion of Tarawa and that it “sank in shallow water during that invasion”, but was later salvaged. Classified as an attack transport in 1943, the ship earned seven battle stars during the war, according to NavSource, a volunteer-run history site, but was sold for scrap in 1969.</p> <p>Still, the fate of the USS Monrovia and its illustrious history does little to shed light on how the little Higgins boat went from the battles of Europe to the bottom of Lake Shasta. For now, it is on its way to a museum in Nebraska where experts will work to preserve it and restore a “weathered ‘combat fatigue look” before it is put on display.</p> <p>The boat is just the latest in a series of peculiar finds pulled from the muck in receding waterways across the west. Another boat linked to the second world war was discovered in Lake Mead, the largest reservoir in the US, along with three sets of human remains that may be linked to mob murders.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the drought is expected to worsen in the coming years, spurred by the climate crisis, that has put more pressure on declining water resources. Roughly half of the American west is categorized as in severe drought by the US Drought Monitor and researchers are concerned that there is little chance for a rainy season strong enough to offset the long periods of dryness.</p> <p>There may be more mysteries that will emerge from the mud. For now, officials are trying to piece together the story of the Lake Shasta Ghost Boat.</p> <p>“There is more to discover of its history and obviously its time on Shasta Lake,” they said. “It really is quite remarkable how it emerged from the lake with so many stories to tell.”</p>

HEADLINE	10/10 Asian giant hornet eradicated in WA?
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/northern-giant-hornet-appears-undetected-washington-state/EIDYPUBRN5HYXNCCRWZ7ZD4JOI/
GIST	<p>The Asian giant hornet, renamed the Northern giant hornet, seems to have completely disappeared in Washington state.</p> <p>Researchers with the Washington State Department of Agriculture said 960 giant hornet traps and 373 volunteer traps were set up in areas where hornets were believed to be over the summer.</p> <p>So far, none of the traps have attracted a single hornet.</p> <p>This time of year is typically when the aggressive worker hornets leave their hives to forage and are usually found in traps.</p> <p>Last year, many hornets were found in later summer. The year before, they weren't trapped until the end of September. However, they could be out until November.</p> <p>Researchers said it is possible the hornets have been eradicated.</p> <p>Researchers said they will continue to set traps for three consecutive years showing no confirmed capture of any Northern giant hornets.</p> <p>Experts said that in the fall, males and new queens leave their hives to mate. The mated queens then build a new nest, resulting in the formation of a colony in May.</p> <p>Four hives have been removed from our state as of last year but currently, there are no signs of the bee predators in our state.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Calif. city to run out of water in 2mo.?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/10/drought-california-water-levels/
GIST	<p>COALINGA, Calif. – The residents of this sun-scorched city feel California's endless drought when the dust lifts off the brown hills and flings grit into their living rooms. They see it when they drive past almond trees being ripped from the ground for lack of water and the new blinking sign at the corner of Elm and Cherry warning: "No watering front yard lawns."</p> <p>The fire chief noticed it when he tested hydrants in August – a rare occurrence as Coalinga desperately seeks to conserve water – and the first one shot out a foot-long block of compacted dirt. The second one ejected like a can of Axe body spray.</p> <p>The schools superintendent could only think drought on the first day of school when a 4-year-old fell onto unwatered turf, breaking an arm; or when the chain saws dropped three coastal redwoods outside Henry F. Bishop Elementary that had withered and died. Superintendent Lori Villanueva even lost a portion of her own right lung last year from a drought-aggravated illness, valley fever, that's caused by breathing soil fungus whipped up off the dry ground.</p> <p>But what lies ahead might be far worse for the 17,000 residents living amid the oil derricks and cattle farms on the western edge of the state's Central Valley. Coalinga has only one source of water – a shrinking allotment from an aqueduct managed by the federal government – and officials are projecting the city will use up that amount before the end of the year.</p>

That looming threat has left city officials racing between meetings in Sacramento and phone calls to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation seeking to increase their water supply. Some residents have begun stockpiling five-gallon water jugs in their homes, while many expect major spikes in their water bills. If Coalinga can't find relief, it would be forced to buy additional water on the open market at exorbitant prices that could swamp the city's budget.

That was the grim scenario facing Mayor Ron Ramsey when he rapped his knuckles on the table and cursed at a City Council meeting in early August. Everyone but Ramsey had just voted to ban watering front yards and to ramp up penalties on overuse – measures they conceded would not save nearly what was needed. But it was more than Ramsey could stomach.

"It's too much. Too fast," Ramsey told the room. On top of that, he said, it wasn't fair.

"Go to the state capitol and they got green grass, don't they?" he said. "They can do it, but why can't we?"

Coalinga, named for its history as a coal mining town, is a small Republican outpost in liberal California. The city had already defied state leadership in 2020, passing a resolution that declared all businesses essential to avoid mandatory pandemic closures. When it was time for the state to distribute covid-19 relief funds to municipalities, Coalinga didn't get any.

The water shortage felt to some like another kind of retaliation.

"How do you not give farmers water when they feed everybody unless you're trying to put them out of business?" asked Scott Netherton, owner of Coalinga's lone movie theater and executive director of its chamber of commerce.

"It feels like we're being singled out, small towns," he said. "It's like they're trying to force them out to where you've got to move into the bigger cities."

Coalinga's brackish groundwater has never been a reliable option. Before a canal was completed in the early 1970s that connected Coalinga to a major aqueduct, the city relied on water delivered by train. After a 1983 earthquake that destroyed some 300 homes in town and spread concerns about water contamination, residents resorted to donations; Anheuser-Busch sent drinking water to Coalinga in beer cans and bottles.

But the drought has made residents question the very survival of their city.

"We've never been this bad where they said we're going to run out of water," Mayor Ramsey said.

A future with far less access to water

The most severe drought in the American West since the 9th century is now in its 23rd year. All across the region, communities are confronting shortages worse than they have ever known. The biggest reservoirs have fallen to record lows. Whole neighborhoods have lost their water supply as wells have gone dry. States along the dwindling Colorado River are negotiating water cuts that could bring dramatic disruptions to some of the country's most important agricultural belts.

The hotter and drier climate has forced California and other states to reckon with a future in which they will have access to far less water, even as populations continue to grow. In August, Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) presented a 19-page plan to deal with the expected loss of 10 percent of the state's water supply by 2040.

"The hots are getting a lot hotter. The dries are getting a lot drier," Newsom told reporters at the time. "We have to adapt to that new reality, and we have to change our approach."

California started the year with its driest four months on record. Snowpack in the Sierra Nevada this year was a small fraction of the historical average. Depleted reservoirs have led to restrictions on outdoor watering for millions of state residents.

Coalinga's water comes from the San Luis Reservoir, about 90 miles to the north, and is delivered along a portion of the California Aqueduct that was built in the 1960s and helped fuel the region's agricultural growth. This is part of the Central Valley Project, a network of dams, reservoirs and canals now severely hobbled by drought.

Farmers received no allocation from that network this year; municipalities and industrial users were limited to what the Bureau of Reclamation calculates as their "public health and safety" needs – a first in the history of the Central Valley Project, which dates to the 1930s.

For Coalinga, that meant 1,920 acre-feet of water – a quarter of its historic allotment and just over half of what it expected to consume this year. Federal officials raised that in April to 2,500 acre-feet – a level that still fell more than 1,000 acre-feet short of what Coalinga needed. An acre-foot is about 326,000 gallons, what it would take to cover an acre of land with one foot of water.

Over the summer, city officials calculated the city's supply would run out by mid-September.

Beyond that point, if Coalinga kept using water from the aqueduct, it would belong to someone else.

"You don't have the right to take that water," was the message Sean Brewer, Coalinga's assistant city manager, said he got from Reclamation officials.

The bureau said in a statement that it had been working closely with Coalinga on its "unique water supply circumstances and challenges." Brewer agreed that the bureau has been "extremely helpful" even as its "hands are tied." Federal officials gave him names of vendors who might sell the city the extra water it needed. But as Brewer worked his way down the list of irrigation districts, farmers and other private interests, the news wasn't good.

"Nobody has water to sell right now," he said.

Those who do are not selling it cheap.

"I cringe when I say this," Brewer told the City Council on Aug. 4, as he reported that water that normally cost the city \$190 per acre-foot was being sold on the open market for as much as \$2,500 per acre-foot. The city might need up to \$2.5 million to buy enough water to last the year, he said. The city's entire budget is \$10 million.

"We just don't have \$2.5 million to buy water," City Council member Adam Adkisson said in an interview, calling the water prices "criminal."

"In a natural disaster, you can't increase the cost of bottled water 2,000 percent; you'd go to jail for that," he said. "But somehow these people can increase it 2,000 percent and everything's just fine."

Fear of that kind of "drought profiteering" prompted state Sen. Melissa Hurtado (D) to write Attorney General Merrick Garland in May asking for an investigation into the anti-competitive practices of hedge funds and other investors that "literally steal our most life dependent resource from ourselves and future generations in exchange for a profit."

Hurtado talked to Adkisson in August as he was searching for a solution for Coalinga and found him "in panic mode."

"The price of water, the cost of water, is increasing, but it's not just going to be to the Central Valley; it's going to be statewide," Hurtado said. "We're in a crisis situation in a matter of weeks, I think."

‘What do you do when the water runs out?’

In the High Times marijuana store – a burgeoning industry for Coalinga, which has two prominent dispensaries downtown and a pot farm run out of a defunct prison owned by Bob Marley’s son Damian – manager Luis Zamora is just starting to register a new level of concern about the water crisis.

“Just in the last probably two days, I’ve had people asking me, like, what do you do when the water runs out?”

He laughed.

“Exactly. What do you do?”

Coalinga has tried to get tough on water waste. The city has code enforcers and even police officers patrolling for water violations. The city put a moratorium on building swimming pools, raised water rates several times and last year began imposing “drought fees” for overuse. But the city soon voted to refund the \$277,000 it had raised in fees because water use wasn’t declining enough.

“It was supposed to be a deterrent,” said Netherton, the chamber of commerce’s executive director. “It wasn’t deterring anybody.”

Zamora has been slowly stockpiling five-gallon water bottles at home – he’s up to nine of them. He has stopped watering his lawn and watched as his neighbors’ yards have also turned brown. But others’ lawns in town are still green, and residents are keenly aware who is still watering.

“They encourage people to kind of rat each other out, out here,” Zamora said. “So if you water, people will be taking pictures of you.”

“I’m watching your yard,” Mary Jones, a Coalinga resident, told Mayor Ramsey at an Aug. 18 City Council meeting.

Ramsey, who had by then accepted the ban on watering front lawns, resorted to spraying on his own remedy to keep his lawn looking nice.

“Hey, you know why mine’s green?” he asked Jones. “I painted it.”

“I would paint mine, too, but it’s dirt,” she responded. “I can’t fool anyone with dirt.”

A short-term reprieve

Coalinga’s two biggest water users sit next to each other on a lonely two-lane road several miles outside of town. The Pleasant Valley State Prison and the Department of State Hospitals-Coalinga, a psychiatric hospital for sexually violent predators, together consume about 20 percent of the city’s water allocation. And both institutions have told the city they can’t conserve more water than they already do.

Outside the psychiatric hospital, there is a long row of coastal redwoods that appear green and bushy, a landscaping flourish Coalinga residents view with increasing suspicion.

“Go look at our coastal redwoods in our medians; they’re all dead. The ones at the school? Dead,” said Adkisson, the council member. “I think there’s opportunities for them to conserve when it comes to landscaping.”

The hospital has operated under a drought plan for the past eight years. The facility has removed most grass from “non-patient care areas,” has removed shrubs and plants, has resorted to controlled shower times, closely monitors leaks and “continues to make every effort” to use water efficiently, according to Ralph Montano, a spokesman for the Department of State Hospitals.

	<p>“Unfortunately, [the hospital’s] coastal redwoods are brown and dying from lack of water also,” Montano said in a statement.</p> <p>The prison did not respond to requests for comment.</p> <p>City officials argued that the burden of saving water on behalf of the two state-run institutions was unfairly being borne by residents. In August, with Coalinga just weeks from running out of water, the Bureau of Reclamation responded by increasing the city’s allotment by 531 acre-feet “to assist with meeting public health and safety needs,” the bureau said in a statement.</p> <p>But Coalinga officials say they are still about 600 acre-feet short and that buying additional supplies remains extremely expensive. They now project they will run out of water sometime in early December.</p> <p>When that happens, no one knows exactly what to expect.</p> <p>“You don’t want to say that they’ll never turn the water off. I don’t see how they could,” Mayor Ramsey said. “I hate to say this, but with the government we have right now, you never know.”</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	10/10 Environmental crime is 3rd most lucrative
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/border-security/environmental-crime-is-worlds-third-most-lucrative-crime/
GIST	<p>With environmental crime ranking as the world’s third largest illegal trade, INTERPOL has joined calls at the United for Wildlife (UfW) global summit for enhanced collective efforts against the criminal syndicates behind wildlife crime and its impact on communities and biodiversity.</p> <p>Poaching and trafficking undermine the rule of law and economic development. The transnational organized criminal groups that are driving the killing and extinction of species such as rhinos, elephants, big cats and endangering marine life also threaten the security and livelihood of local communities worldwide.</p> <p>Organized crime syndicates trafficking ivory and other illicit goods to Asia, the U.S. and Europe are often also involved in the trafficking of weapons and drugs, fueling corruption, intimidation and even murder along the supply chain.</p> <p>Against this context, the UfW summit (October 3-4) gathered some 300 global leaders from law enforcement agencies, conservation organizations and the private sector who reviewed pioneering work to drive policy change, support criminal investigations and shape sustained concerted action against wildlife crime.</p> <p>Speaking at the summit, the Prince of Wales highlighted the serious and organized nature of wildlife crime: “The illegal wildlife trade is a crime that robs us all of our most precious natural resources, funds organized crime, and the harms of which are often directly felt by the most vulnerable communities. There are still too many criminals who believe they can act with impunity, too many lives being destroyed and too many species on the brink of extinction due to this heinous crime.</p> <p>“But there is cause for optimism. United for Wildlife set out to ensure that those involved in wildlife crime face an international response as powerful and coordinated as any other serious and organized crime. To bring their sinister operations out of the shadows and to ensure that communities are equipped, empowered and supported to protect themselves and their natural world,” added Prince William.</p>

Wildlife trafficking is frequently viewed as a low-risk, high-profit activity for offenders who face limited penalties. In this respect, INTERPOL underscored at the summit the role of global cross-sector partnerships against the illegal wildlife trade, which is worth some \$20 billion per year alone.

“Often overlooked and under-prosecuted, wildlife crime is a sophisticated and serious crime with far-reaching and devastating consequences not just to wildlife, but to communities and the wellbeing of the planet,” said INTERPOL’s Executive Director of Police Services, Stephen Kavanagh.

“INTERPOL recognizes wildlife crime as an international security priority and we are committed to working with all sectors to pursue the criminals, disrupt their activities and minimize their harm to life and the world’s biodiversity,” added Mr Kavanagh.

Addressing the convergence between illegal wildlife trafficking and other serious crimes and terrorism, Mr Kavanagh further emphasized how wildlife crime generates income for non-state armed groups and terrorist organizations in Central and East Africa, citing evidence for example pointing to Al-Shabaab’s involvement in the illicit ivory trade.

With its links to violent crime, corruption, and other forms of trafficking, environmental crime is a transnational criminal powerhouse worth more than \$280 billion a year, the third most lucrative crime globally, behind drug trafficking and counterfeit crimes.

Through its dedicated Environmental Security Program (ENS) and its center for tackling financial crime and corruption (IFCACC), INTERPOL is working with partners worldwide to target the huge profits made from these types of crimes, and help dismantle the criminal networks behind them.

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HEADLINE	10/10 Mexico military sold grenades to cartels
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/v7vpzx/data-leak-mexico-military-sold-to-cartel
GIST	<p>Mexico’s military sold hand grenades and tactical equipment to drug cartels, according to a series of official documents leaked by a hacker group.</p> <p>“On May 31 2019 a military member offered 70 hand grenades to an operator of a criminal organization at 26,000 pesos each (roughly \$1,300),” the leaked document showed. “The criminal organization confirmed the payment for eight [grenades] that were handed over at Atlacomulco, Mexico State.”</p> <p>The documents were leaked after a security breach at Mexico’s Defense Secretary, and published by a group called Guacamaya. The leak is one of Mexico’s biggest, and is composed of more than 4 million confidential documents, mostly emails, from inside the Mexican government.</p> <p>One of the military members selling weapons to criminal organizations is identified on the documents as “Antiguo” (which means old), military slang for a high-ranking member. The message exchange between the soldier and the buyer came out of Military Base Number 1, in Mexico City, according to the documents.</p> <p>The Mexican military also offered tactical equipment (unspecified, but that could include bulletproof vests or night-vision binoculars, for example), ammunition, information about rival gang members and the whereabouts of government officials, for the right price, according to emails included in the massive data leak.</p> <p>A leaked email dated June 24, 2019, revealed that another military member identified as “Nuevo Comandante” with the rank of colonel also sold “two thousand rounds for AK-47s, five thousand for R-15s and 50 chargers for each.”</p>

	<p>The same commander also offered to help an unidentified criminal organization by locating a local attorney general that it was trying to assassinate. Members of a “quick reaction” team belonging to the Mexican military were also protecting cartel members, according to more leaked emails.</p> <p>“An active member of the Quick Reaction Team in the metropolitan area of Guadalajara is serving as a link between the New Generation Jalisco Cartel leaders and authorities at the three levels,” the document said.</p> <p>The hack released more than six terabytes of confidential information revealing criminal organizations, confidential military tasks, and personal information on Mexico’s president.</p> <p>President Andrés Manuel López Obrador downplayed the millions of documents leaked and said that “the only thing important” from the data breach was information revealing that he suffers from angina, which can lead to a heart attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 PM: Thailand crackdown on drugs
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/10/thai-pm-announces-crackdown-on-drugs-in-wake-of-nursery-attack
GIST	<p>The Thai prime minister, Prayuth Chan-ocha, has ordered a clampdown on drugs, including an emphasis on rehabilitation, following the mass shooting and stabbing at a nursery in north-eastern Thailand that left 37 people dead, mostly young children.</p> <p>The unprecedented attack has shaken Thailand, where mass killings are rare, and prompted calls for a tougher stance on drugs. It was carried out by a former police officer, identified by police as Panya Khamrab, who had been dismissed from the force for methamphetamine possession.</p> <p>On Monday, the government spokesperson Anucha Burapachaisri said in a statement that Prayuth had ordered the police to urgently crack down on illegal drugs and to bring users to receive treatment.</p> <p>“[Prayuth] ordered provincial governors to strengthen drug prevention plans to tackle problems in their areas,” the statement said, adding the government had always taken drug eradication seriously.</p> <p>The opposition Pheu Thai party has said it is preparing to open an extraordinary session of the House of Representatives after the nursery killing. The party – founded by loyalists of the exiled former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, whose infamous drugs crackdowns were strongly condemned by rights groups and left an estimated 2,500 dead – has criticised the current government for not doing enough to tackle drugs.</p> <p>The Pheu Thai leader, Cholan Srikaew, has promised a “war on drugs” if the party wins next year’s elections, including stronger prevention and rehabilitation.</p> <p>An autopsy indicated that Panya had not taken drugs in the 72 hours prior to the attack. However he had appeared in court over drug charges a few hours beforehand, and was due to appear again the following day. His mother told local media he was in debt and had drug addiction problems.</p> <p>Supplies of methamphetamine have grown rapidly across south-east Asia over recent years. A recent UN report said the price of tablet and crystal methamphetamine had fallen to all-time lows as supplies had surged. According to local reports, a tablet costs 10 baht (£0.24) for wholesale, not much more than a bottle of water. The street price for the pills is between 20 and 25 baht.</p> <p>More than a billion methamphetamine tablets were seized in east and south-east Asia in 2021 – seven times higher than 10 years ago. Analysts say the cartels, whose production is centred in south-east Asia’s Golden Triangle along the borders between Thailand, Myanmar and Laos, continue to thrive despite police raids.</p>

	<p>Statistics quoted by local news show that in 2021, the authorities seized 272m methamphetamine tablets; 8,691kg of crystal methamphetamine; and 484kg of heroin. During the same period, 144,110 people were arrested over drug-related offences.</p> <p>Cholnan also called for a review of gun legislation. Mass shootings are rare in Thailand, though in 2020 a soldier opened fire at an army base and shopping mall, killing at least 29 people, an unprecedented incident that prompted a debate over firearm ownership, rates of which are high in Thailand. Similar questions have re-emerged after the nursery attack.</p> <p>Possession of an illegal firearm can lead to a prison sentence of up to 10 years and/or a fine of up to 20,000 baht (£480), though unregistered guns remain prevalent due to poor enforcement.</p> <p>Thailand had about 10m privately owned firearms in 2016, according to Gunpolicy.org. This included about 4m firearms that were illegal and unregistered. The firearms used in the nursery attack had been obtained legally.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Tacoma homicide rate continues to rise
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/tacoma-double-shooting-south-m-street/281-36fd637a-1978-49e3-8718-bd19cdca9036
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — Tacoma’s homicide rate continues to rise after a weekend of deadly violence.</p> <p>Two shootings occurred on Sunday that left two people dead and a woman injured.</p> <p>The first shooting occurred just after 2 a.m. in the 200 block of South 80th Street, where a 51-year-old male victim was found dead.</p> <p>The second occurred just after 10 p.m. in the 5200 block of South M street. A 32-year-old male victim was declared dead at the scene by Tacoma Fire. An 18-year-old female victim was transported to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.</p> <p>Tacoma police said they received multiple 911 calls in regard to the shooting Sunday night.</p> <p>When officers arrived, they found a 32-year-old man shot in the driver’s seat of a vehicle. Police said the 18-year-old woman was a passenger in the car.</p> <p>The man was unresponsive when officers arrived.</p> <p>Police said the vehicle the man was in struck an unoccupied car that was parked on the street. KING 5 crews at the scene saw more than a dozen evidence markers on the ground early Monday morning.</p> <p>Jeremy Lanning, who lives nearby on South M Street, said he heard the shots, but was surprised to see just how close he was.</p> <p>“I stuck my head out the window just in time to see them come all the way around here, and he just missed Jon’s truck and slammed into mine, and by that time, I was on the phone with 911,” he said.</p> <p>Tacoma police said the shooting is being investigated as a homicide. No other information was available by Monday night.</p> <p>There has been a steady increase in homicides in Tacoma over the past several years.</p> <p>Public Information Officer Wendy Haddow said Tacoma police have investigated 36 homicides so far in 2022. There have also been three deadly police shootings in 2022, Haddow said.</p>

	Tacoma police investigated a total of 34 homicides in 2021, 31 homicides in 2020 and 23 homicides in 2019. Haddow said there were 18 homicides in Tacoma in 2018 and 12 in 2017.
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HEADLINE	10/10 Court: mother's love has no monetary value
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/mothers-love-priceless-but-has-no-monetary-value-wa-appeals-court-rules/
GIST	<p>What is a mother's love worth? It's priceless but not a thing of value, an appeals court ruled, overturning a Skagit County woman's conviction for soliciting to kill her former husband.</p> <p>The Washington Court of Appeals on Monday overturned Vanessa Valdiglesias LaValle's conviction of first-degree solicitation to commit murder, for which she had been found guilty in 2021 for trying to persuade her son to kill his father with rat poison. Valdiglesias LaValle, who lived in Mount Vernon, was sentenced to 15 years in prison for her conviction, which is now remanded to trial court.</p> <p>Valdiglesias LaValle, who had lost custody of her two children, in 2020 told her son, then 10 years old, that if he put rat poison in her ex-husband's food and drinks then the boy's dad would die, and she and the children could live together forever, according to a secretly recorded conversation referenced in court documents.</p> <p>The three Court of Appeals Division 1 judges ruled Valdiglesias LaValle's desire to be with her two children forever doesn't equate to a "thing of value" necessary to support a criminal solicitation conviction. In Washington state, a person is guilty of criminal solicitation when he or she "offers to give or gives money or other thing of value" with intent to promote or facilitate the commission of a crime.</p> <p>The term "thing of value" refers to tangible or intangible items that have monetary value, the appeals court wrote. Valdiglesias LaValle's son testified during her trial in Skagit County Superior Court that he took his mother seriously but that she never spoke of actually giving him something to poison his dad. No evidence showed she offered to give, or gave, her son anything of value, the appeals court wrote.</p> <p>Valdiglesias LaValle's attorney, Suzanne Lee Elliott of the Washington Appellate Project, said she was pleased with the judges' opinion.</p> <p>"I think they reached the right decision because how one defines 'solicitation' can be either wildly overinclusive or include actions that don't sufficiently indicate an intent or an exchange for the crime," she said.</p> <p>Valdiglesias LaValle, 39, grew up in Peru and met her now-former husband through an online dating service. They married in Skagit County in 2008, when she was 25 and he was 50, and had two children. He filed for dissolution in 2015, according to court documents. She was awarded full custody until 2019, when he was granted full custody and she was given weekly four-hour visits.</p> <p>During one of the visits, Valdiglesias LaValle's son decided to secretly record their conversation using a phone hidden under a blanket because his father had suggested he do so. Audio of the recording was played during the trial.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 UK: arrests; environmental groups protest
SOURCE	https://news.met.police.uk/news/more-than-100-arrests-after-two-days-of-protest-related-activity-by-environmental-groups-455185
GIST	More than 100 people have been arrested following a weekend of protest-related activity by environmental groups.

A significant policing operation was put in place to ensure officers could keep protestors safe while being able to respond quickly to incidents of criminal damage and highway obstruction.

On Saturday morning, a proactive vehicle stop in Berwick Street, W1 resulted in the arrest of three people linked to the Animal Rebellion group. Acting on information that those in the vehicle were intending to play a leading role in causing damage later that day, officers intercepted them and seized items including fire extinguishers filled with paint.

Officers on duty in Green Park also spotted two people from the same group wanted in connection with incidents at shops in central London on Friday where milk had been poured on carpets and food displays. They were both arrested and have since been charged.

The main body of Animal Rebellion protestors were closely monitored as they moved around central London, with officers on hand to prevent offences and make arrests where necessary.

Away from the main protest group, there were three incidents where damage was caused to shops and a restaurant by people emptying tins of paint onto windows and floors. Nine people were arrested on suspicion of criminal damage in relation to those incidents.

Officers also responded, where appropriate, to minimise disruption caused by protestors unreasonably blocking roads and causing serious disruption to people going about their everyday lives.

18 protestors from Animal Rebellion who blocked Westminster Bridge on Saturday evening and refused to leave when requested to do so were arrested.

Earlier that day, 24 protestors linked to the Just Stop Oil group were arrested for obstructing the highway after they blocked Edgware Road/Upper Berkeley Street and Marylebone Road/Baker Street.

On Sunday afternoon, 47 people from the same group were arrested when they blocked roads in the vicinity of Piccadilly Circus with some using locking devices to try and delay police interventions.

Superintendent Chris Green, who led the policing operation, said: “This weekend we saw repeated efforts to cause damage to businesses and to unreasonably disrupt the lives of ordinary Londoners by blocking roads.

“The policing operation required to respond to these challenges is significant. It requires many officers out on the ground in key locations in addition to those who are needed to process prisoners and then carry out the investigations to turn arrests into charges and ultimately, outcomes at court.

“We fully support peaceful protest and will always try to work with organisers so that protests can go ahead safely, but the public rightly expect us to respond swiftly and effectively where protest crosses the line into criminality.

“Thanks to the dynamic and effective response of the dedicated men and women who were on duty over the past two days, we have identified offenders, prevented further incidents of criminal damage and kept disruption in central London to a minimum.”

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HEADLINE	10/10 Mail thefts surge nationwide
SOURCE	https://www.hastingstribune.com/ap/national/mail-thefts-surge-nationwide/article_3d06e6a4-3d25-525c-849c-be955001854d.html
GIST	DAYTON, Ohio — A rash of local mail thefts coincides with a reported 17-fold nationwide increase in checks stolen from the U.S. mail being posted for sale online — as officials representing postal service police say they are hamstrung in arresting perpetrators, a Dayton Daily News investigation found.

Frank Albergo, national president of the postal police officers association, said mail theft arrests dropped from more than 2,000 in fiscal year 2019 to a projected 1,200 in fiscal year 2022 after a federal policy restricted their arrest powers in 2020.

The United States Postal Service has said it is safe to use blue mailboxes to send mail during the day during operating hours. Albergo said he would be reluctant to do so because of the ongoing issues nationwide.

"It's a disaster, it really is," Albergo said.

Officials in the Dayton region have reported that they are investigating a rash of mail-related crime. Items were stolen from at least seven different post office mailboxes in Beavercreek, Dayton, Kettering and the Centerville/Washington Twp. area.

In Kettering and Riverside, nearly \$75,000 in stolen checks were cashed by parties they were not issued to, police said. The United States Postal Inspection Service has offered a \$50,000 reward for information that leads to the arrest and prosecution of suspects accused in recent armed robberies of mail carriers in Dayton and Trotwood.

The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office said it is aware of 42 cases where mail was stolen, but could not say how much money was stolen from those checks, as the United States Postal Inspection Service handles investigations. That information was not immediately available from the federal agency.

Stolen checks posted online

David Maimon, director of the Evidence-Based Cyber Security Research Group at Georgia State University, leads a team that tracks criminal behavior online. He said that starting in August 2021, they saw a big spike in checks being posted online.

There has been a large increase in stolen checks being posted for sale on the dark web and on encrypted text apps, he said.

"And since then things have exploded even more dramatically. Instead of seeing an average of 114 checks a week, now we are seeing 2,000 checks a week across the country," he said.

He said it started in states like California, Florida, New York and Texas, but now checks from people living in Midwestern states are becoming common.

"Organized crime groups are doing it at this point," Maimon said. "They have people who rob the mail carriers for their (mailbox) keys, (people) who are going to the mailbox and emptying the mailbox and taking them to a hideout, usually cheap hotel room, where criminals sort through the mail, look for the checks, look for the credit cards and then once they find those they usually wash them."

He said washing a check involves removing the payee information from the check and usually the amount it was written for. He said sometimes the thief will cash the checks into drop accounts, and other times the checks will wind up online for sale.

Arrests, prosecution

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Ohio said they are aware of the situation and are taking it seriously.

"Mail theft is a harmful and disruptive crime," a spokeswoman for the office said. "Among other things, mail theft has the potential to interfere with private communications between friends and loved ones, and it can result in significant financial losses through the misappropriation of checks, credit cards, and sensitive personal information."

She said perpetrators could be sentenced to prison for up to five years.

"The U.S. Attorney's Office will continue in its efforts to see that relevant federal laws are enforced in a manner that protects the community and deters mail theft," the spokeswoman said.

But before there is prosecution, there has to be an arrest.

Postal police officers are uniformed officers responsible for protecting the postal system and usually work in metro areas. Albergo, with the Postal Police Officers Association, said they can sometimes be deployed to areas where mail thefts are high. Albergo believes a decision by post office leaders in 2020 limiting postal officer powers away from postal service properties is contributing to the problem.

The United States Postal Inspection Service said postal police still do an important job protecting the mail on Postal Service properties. USPIA said postal inspectors, who are investigators for the service, have "the responsibility to investigate postal-related offenses that occur off U.S. Postal Service property."

Albergo contends not enough is being done to prevent mail theft.

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, said he is aware of the ongoing mail thefts in the state.

"This is a very important issue that will require USPS and the United States Postal Inspection Service to review their safekeeping measures, maintenance, and overall management of a key piece of their infrastructure," Brown said in a statement to the Dayton Daily News. "It's past time that Postmaster General (Louis) DeJoy make changes that will protect the privacy of hardworking Ohioans that depend on USPS for crucial goods and services and ensure the safety of mail carriers across Ohio."

MAIL THEFT ARRESTS IN THE UNITED STATES BY FISCAL YEAR

— 2019 — 2,078

— 2020 — 1,622

— 2021 — 1,511

— 2022 — 1,219*

*Projected data from postal police union president Frank Albergo

Source: United States Postal Inspection Services Annual Reports

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HEADLINE	10/09 SPD policy allows DUI suspects to flee?
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3665807/rantz-seattle-police-policy-let-dui-suspect-flee-stolen-car/
GIST	<p>A draft policy mandates Seattle police allow DUI suspects to flee, even when they're in stolen cars. And if a DUI suspect in a vehicle refuses to comply, officers must leave the scene. Some officers have already been told to follow this new guidance, according to multiple sources.</p> <p>Captain Kevin Grossman in the North precinct outlined a draft policy dated Sept. 29, obtained by the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH. It has caused great confusion and its effects are reverberating across the department.</p> <p>In an Oct. 1 email, Grossman sent out the draft to his officers, according to a source. It's unclear why the captain released the draft or why he wrote it in the first place. While the Seattle Police Department (SPD)</p>

has not adopted this as an official policy, one source explained officers were verbally instructed to follow it in at least one precinct. And it's spreading unabated.

'Phantom policy' spreads

Some commanders told their officers to follow this as policy, according to two sources. The Seattle Police Officers Guild (SPOG) explained to the Jason Rantz Show that at least one officer was even accused of violating the "phantom policy" to the independent oversight agency, the Office of Police Accountability (OPA). SPOG says the misconception about the policy has yet to be corrected by the department, as of Friday, October 7.

The policy, as written, is sure to be controversial and comes as the SPD aims to mitigate the risks associated with vehicular pursuits. While state law prohibits pursuits, a policy that the SPD adopted before its passage, DUI suspects are treated differently. Under the law, police may pursue suspects in vehicles if there's reasonable suspicion of DUI because of the threat they pose on the roads.

To prevent a pursuit in the first place, officers have used a pinning maneuver where a patrol vehicle inches toward the suspect's vehicle, making it difficult for them to drive away. Officers have had run-ins with addicts clearly high on fentanyl, sitting in running vehicles, sometimes with their foot on the brake. This poses an obvious public safety threat.

The draft policy

The pinning strategy is not always successful. If the driver wakes up and drives off, it could damage patrol vehicles or officers. But at that point, will SPD officers pursue it? Not under the draft policy.

Under the draft policy, officers are given three directives when "a driver is or appears to be passed out behind the wheel of a vehicle (whether stolen or not)." They're told: "Treat the situation as a high-risk vehicle stop. Allow sufficient room (at least one car's length) between the suspect vehicle and patrol vehicle to permit a path of egress for the suspect vehicle. And ensure there are sufficient officers on scene."

If the driver flees, officers are instructed to "allow it to leave, broadcast last direction of travel, and complete an incident report."

In cases where the driver either doesn't respond because they're passed out or are refusing to comply and "the only crime(s) at issue are DUI and/or Possession of a Stolen Vehicle," the officer must, "attempt to hail the driver using voice or PA for a reasonable amount of time, and then leave the scene, and complete an incident report."

The draft explains that the policy impetus is wanting all officers to be trained in Vehicle-Related Force Tactics. But officers say they've been effectively using pinning for years.

Police reaction

Officers are upset with the draft policy, though some note that they've been handcuffed from doing their jobs so much already that this doesn't phase them the way it normally would. Many speaking with the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH believe the policy results from Democrat police reform laws.

"My personal opinion on the matter is that if the state doesn't want us to pursue people, then I am not going to risk civil or criminal liability pushing the boundaries of the law. That opinion is held by many when it comes to pursuits, traffic stops, and some Terry stops," an officer told the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

SPD is considering where they stand on the policy of pursuits in relationship to DUIs. It's unclear if they are considering the policy outlined by Captain Grossman or if his draft is based on what the Command Staff at SPD is considering.

HEADLINE	10/09 Driver hits bar crowd; 1 killed, 4 injured
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/driver-hits-crowd-colorado-bar-killed-hospitalized-91257393
GIST	<p>GOLDEN, Colo. -- One person was killed and four people seriously injured after a man intentionally drove a pickup truck through a crowd gathered outside a Colorado bar following an altercation early Sunday morning, authorities said.</p> <p>The 29-year-old driver and a 25-year-old passenger were arrested after the attack around 1:40 a.m. Sunday in the city of Golden west of Denver, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office said.</p> <p>Just before the attack, bouncers outside the Rock Rest Lodge broke up an altercation between the two suspects and some of the victims, the sheriff's office said. The suspects got into the pickup, backed out of a parking spot in front of the bar and intentionally drove into victims including bar employees, the sheriff's office said.</p> <p>Deputies found a man who was unconscious and later pronounced dead at the scene. Four people were taken to a local hospital and three people sustained minor injuries, the sheriff's office said.</p> <p>The suspects were stopped nearby after the attack and deputies took the them into custody. The driver faces charges including first degree murder, three counts of first degree assault and three counts of second degree assault. The passenger, who owned the pickup, faces charges of accessory to first degree murder, accessory to second degree assault and accessory to first degree assault.</p> <p>Another passenger who was in the vehicle is not facing charges.</p> <p>The name of the deceased victim was not immediately released.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 Climate activists glue hands to a Picasso
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/pkqmk8/climate-activists-have-glued-their-hands-to-a-picasso-in-australia
GIST	<p>Melbourne's National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) has become the setting for a stunt that is fast becoming an infamous part of a climate change activist's arsenal: glueing hands to a bonafide masterpiece. In this case: Picasso's <i>Massacre in Korea</i>.</p> <p>On Sunday, two members of Extinction Rebellion – a global climate movement that often uses disruptive protesting – were found stuck to the Spanish painter's artwork at around 12:40p.m. According to a statement from police, the 49-year-old woman from New South Wales and 59-year-old man from Footscray, were later removed sometime after 2pm.</p> <p>The painting itself is the depiction of a group of naked women and children being “massacred” by firing squad, and an embodiment of Picasso's own anti-war stance.</p> <p>“We're highlighting, specifically, the dimension of war and famine that comes along with the climate crisis. I think it's overlooked,” Mark Conroy, a spokesperson for the Extinction Rebellion told VICE.</p> <p>“Mass migrations can drive conflict, and drive starvation. And linking that to the <i>Massacre in Korea</i> painting of Picasso's, which is a very stark depiction of war and degradation. We're hoping to draw those links.”</p> <p>Other visitors to the gallery took to social media, posting iterations of the event on their timelines. In one piece of footage, a sign reading “Climate Chaos = War And Famine” can be seen sitting at the protestor's feet while a security guard ushers other guests away.</p> <p>Though the protesters aimed to cause a disruption, Conroy says that their intention was to never actually damage the painting.</p>

	<p>“We're not looking to destroy priceless artwork,” he said.</p> <p>“So that’s why that painting was selected. For its content, and also because it had the perspex shield.”</p> <p>According to police, the duo were released without charge.</p> <p>“The police and the gallery are determining the extent of the damage and whether there's a case for criminal damage. They'll receive a court summons if that is the case,” said Conroy.</p> <p>The stunt comes on Day 2 of what the Extinction Rebellion has dubbed their “Spring Rebellion”; what Conroy says will be 2 weeks of disruptions across the state of Victoria.</p> <p>“Rebellion is the only way for us to effectively get our message across and communicate the urgency for change. And so we don't relish failure. But yes, we can certainly expect directivity to be happening all around Victoria. Not just Melbourne, over the next two weeks.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 More hiring people with criminal records
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/more-businesses-want-to-hire-people-with-criminal-records-amid-tight-job-market-11665173965?mod=hp_lista_pos4
GIST	<p>A labor shortage has pushed more employers to recruit employees who have served prison time.</p> <p>In recent years, small businesses and big U.S. companies including banks and pharmacy chains say they have recognized that so-called second-chance hiring offers a chance to ease societal inequities. It also helps them find more workers in a tight job market.</p> <p>Union Pacific Corp. in the spring started hiring people who had been incarcerated, said Beth Whited, the railroad company’s executive vice president for sustainability and strategy.</p> <p>Railroads have been struggling with service issues they say have been caused by worker shortages, and in September struck a labor deal to avoid a nationwide strike.</p> <p>Ms. Whited said the company has been recruiting for maintenance, train and electrical workers. Providers of transition services to the formerly incarcerated help the railroad find employees, she said. About 120 people have either been hired or are in the application process in several U.S. cities.</p> <p>“We’re really trying to think about the whole person,” Ms. Whited said. “What really happened, what have they done to rehabilitate and learn new skills, what’s their motivation for coming to work so that we’re really thoughtfully considering people.”</p> <p>Finding steady, formal employment has long been a challenge for people who have been convicted of crimes. Job applications often ask about felony convictions, even though there have been efforts across the country to ban such a question. After that, a background check may flag a job seeker’s criminal history, potentially invalidating the application.</p> <p>These roadblocks contribute to higher unemployment rates for formerly incarcerated people. Their unemployment rate was estimated at over 27%, according to a 2018 report from the Prison Policy Initiative.</p> <p>The most recent overall unemployment rate in the U.S. was 3.5%, in September, with labor-force participation remaining below prepandemic levels.</p> <p>Some organizations that advocate for employment for people with criminal records say the current labor shortage has led to more interest from potential employers.</p>

In a survey of almost 900 human-resources professionals by the Society for Human Resource Management Foundation that concluded in January, 46% said they recruited people with criminal records more often than they did a year ago.

“There’s so many employers that are desperate to hire workers,” said Mark Drevno, the founder and executive director at Jails to Jobs Inc., a Lafayette, Calif.-based organization that helps people with criminal records find jobs. “It makes economic sense and so that’s why it’s on their radar I think.”

About 600,000 people [are released from federal and state prisons](#) annually, according to the Justice Department. And just having an arrest record [can hurt people’s employment prospects](#), even if charges were dropped.

Some of the largest U.S. companies are behind the push to hire more people who have been incarcerated. The Second Chance Business Coalition—a group of companies that work to share best practices on hiring people with a criminal background—was formed in 2021 with 29 companies and now has more than 40. Among those are [JP Morgan Chase & Co.](#), [American Airlines Group Inc.](#), [AT&T Inc.](#) and [CVS Health Corp.](#)

Having big companies involved lends credibility to second-chance hiring, said Tim Owens, co-founder and president of the Bloomington, Minn.-based Redemption Project, an organization that pairs inmates with mentors and jobs.

Employer interest in the Redemption Project has also grown, he said.

“I think a lot of employers are looking at this as an untapped talent pool, and given the shortages everywhere they’re open to looking at maybe different groups they hadn’t looked at before,” Mr. Owens said.

About one-tenth of JPMorgan Chase’s new hires last year, roughly 4,300 people, had criminal records, according to Nan Gibson, executive director for JPMorgan Chase’s PolicyCenter. Many of them are placed into teller positions and other jobs at bank branches, said Michelle Kuranty, the company’s global head of talent acquisition sourcing.

The company doesn’t track these workers after they are hired, said Ms. Kuranty.

Ms. Gibson said she hasn’t heard of employees expressing unease about working alongside colleagues with a record.

“What we have seen is a very positive reaction from our employees,” she said. “Our second-chance hiring efforts are a great source of pride for many of our employees.”

Some companies consider hiring people with criminal records part of their diversity and inclusion efforts. CVS, the nation’s biggest healthcare company by revenue, wanted to focus more on what it was doing for communities of color after [the murder of George Floyd](#) in 2020, said Ernie DuPont, CVS’s executive director of workforce initiatives.

Black people are disproportionately likely to be imprisoned. In state prisons, where most convicted prisoners are incarcerated in the U.S., Black people are imprisoned at almost five times the rate of white people, [according to the Sentencing Project](#), a criminal-justice policy research and advocacy group.

And people who have been in prison tend to have lower rates of employment. A [2019 analysis from the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) showed that men who had been jailed for more than six months were less likely to have jobs after their release than other men. The unemployment rate for Black Americans is above the national average—5.8% compared with 3.5%.

	<p>“Demographically there’s a large minority population that has [been] or is incarcerated and so it was an opportunity for us to lean in and do an even better job,” said Mr. DuPont.</p> <p>He said CVS has hired thousands of people with criminal records over the years for jobs including retail and logistics workers and pharmacy technicians.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/10 Police: Tampa shooting kills 1, wounds 6
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/10/10/Tampa-shooting-one-dead-six-wounded/8531665384366/
GIST	<p>Oct. 10 (UPI) -- Authorities in Tampa, Fla., said they are investigating a shooting over the weekend that left one person dead and six others wounded.</p> <p>The Tampa Police Department said in a statement that it is asking the public for help identifying and apprehending the suspect or suspects who were involved in the early Sunday shooting at the LIT Cigar & Martini Lounge at 908 N Franklin St.</p> <p>Police chief Mary O'Connor said preliminary information indicates the shooting erupted shortly before 3 a.m. as a result of a fight between two groups of people at the lounge.</p> <p>Police arrived at the scene to find one man dead. Another four men and two women were also found to be suffering from gunshot wounds and were transported to local hospitals with non-life-threatening injuries, according to authorities.</p> <p>"This is senseless violence," O'Connor said. "There's no reason why anyone should lose their life over a fight at a bar."</p> <p>According to police, the verbal altercation escalated to a shooting after the two groups were escorted out of the lounge and one person went to their vehicle to retrieve a firearm and opened fired.</p> <p>"The suspects clear have a disregard for human life," O'Connor said during a press conference. "They opened fire into a crowd of people that weren't doing anything more than just celebrating out here on Franklin Street, so it's a disturbing set of circumstances."</p> <p>No arrests have been made in the case but O'Connor said that they are aware of at least one suspect.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 Tacoma residents await crime plan results
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/fa#
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — A violent weekend in Tacoma comes at a time when residents are waiting for police to give an update on their new crime-fighting plan.</p> <p>Police found a man dead in the street around 2 a.m. Sunday, less than 12 hours after a shootout outside the Tacoma Mall.</p> <p>“I want to be out in my community. I don’t want to be stuck at home and feel like I can’t go out because there’s going to be gun violence,” Gordon Jablonski of University Place stated on Sunday about gun violence in Tacoma.</p> <p>People living near the Sunday morning homicide near 80th Street and Pacific Avenue did not want to go on camera for fear of retaliation but told KOMO heard at least three gunshots near their apartment complex before police and fire crews got on the scene and found a man dead. They were devastated while describing the moments they say they heard gunshots just feet from their apartment windows early Sunday. They say, unfortunately, gun violence is all too common in their neighborhood, and want to know what police are doing about it.</p>

	<p>On Sunday police said there were still no suspect leads.</p> <p>It was less than 12 hours earlier that gunshots rang out in the Tacoma Mall parking lot. Police said two groups reportedly exchanged shots and fled in their cars, and luckily no one was hurt.</p> <p>“I was really scared about coming to the mall, just because I heard about that shooting yesterday,” Jablonski added.</p> <p>The gun violence citywide and a record year for the number of homicides have locals looking for a response from the police. This comes months after TPD unveiled its new plan to deter crime. This first phase which started in July added emphasis on patrols at crime hot spots, which have not been made public.</p> <p>“They go to these locations for 15 minutes at a time and sit with their lights on,” TPD Spokesperson Wendy Haddow stated back in August. “This is to deter criminal behavior. Officers are also going to turn out in high crime areas.”</p> <p>At last check, police had planned to release the results of just how effective that plan is sometime in October. (https://komonews.com/news/local/tacoma-police-plan-to-cut-crime-underway-but-some-say-they-arent-seeing-a-difference)</p> <p>“We have a new police chief now and that’s all well and good, but you’ve got to come in and you’ve got to attack this where we are,” Dan Jablonski of University Place added. “We’re the ones paying the price.”</p> <p>Tacoma Police on Sunday said the first 90 days of the crime plan was up the first week of October, and that statisticians are reviewing all the data which has not come back to TPD yet.</p> <p>When it does, it will be presented to the city council. Police say that could happen in November.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/08 Italy busts network corrupt port workers
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/border-security/police-dismantle-network-of-corrupt-port-workers-facilitating-ndrangheta-drug-trafficking/
GIST	<p>With the support of Europol and Eurojust, the Italian Financial Corps (Guardia di Finanza) has dismantled a criminal network which relied on corrupt workers in the port of Gioia Tauro to smuggle hundreds of millions of euros’ worth of cocaine into Europe.</p> <p>On October 6, some three hundred police officers carried out coordinated raids against the members of this highly professional criminal syndicate linked to the ‘Ndrangheta. Property searches were carried out in the provinces of Reggio Calabria, Vibo Valentia, Bari, Naples, Rome, Terni, Vicenza, Milan and Novara, resulting so far in 31 arrests and 7 million euros worth of criminal assets being seized.</p> <p>These arrests follow a complex investigation in which over four tonnes of cocaine imported by the criminals have been seized, with an estimated street value exceeding EUR 800 million.</p> <p>The investigation identified a corrupt customs officer who allegedly altered the outcome of an x-ray scan performed on a container containing 300 kilos of cocaine. He is believed to have received a sum equivalent to 3% of the value of the illicit cargo for this.</p> <p>In the framework of intelligence activities underway with Europol, the Italian investigators were also able to identify the other members of this criminal network, structured as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the ‘Ndrangheta, who would arrange for the cocaine to be shipped from South America. • Field coordinators, who would recruit and manage the corrupted dockers, paying them a commission varying between 7 to 20% of the value of the illegal cargo.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complicit port operators who would arrange for the ‘contaminated’ containers to not be intercepted as they were being smuggled into the port of Gioia Tauro. <p>The investigation also made it possible to identify the criminal masterminds responsible for organizing the massive importation of cocaine from South America to Calabria, characterized by periodic shipments of two tonnes each. These criminals feature among the suspects arrested.</p> <p>Europol developed reliable and crucial intelligence concerning the activities of this criminal network and has been working closely with Italian investigators to bring down the whole network. The Head of the European Serious and Organised Crime Centre at Europol, Jari Liukku, said the investigation uncovered how the ‘Ndrangheta is using corruption to enable its criminal activity and undermine law enforcement’s efforts. “Europol sees the use of corruption, in the private or the public sector, as a major enabler of organized crime,” he added. “In this particular investigation we are very pleased to have joined forces with the Italian Guardia di Finanza to support them in fighting large-scale drug trafficking as well as corruption at an EU entry point. In this regard this investigation sets an example.”</p> <p>The investigation was supported by the EU-funded Project ISF4@ON, an Italian-led initiative to tackle mafia-type organized crime groups active in Europe.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/09 Sunnyside keeps attention on gangs
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/months-after-cinco-de-mayo-shooting-sunnyside-keeps-attention-on-gangs/
GIST	<p>SUNNYSIDE, Yakima County — For years, a wooden fence on Harrison Avenue was covered by gang graffiti and tags. Today, a painting of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo presides as the center of a mural that stretches along the fence and around the corner.</p> <p>Kahlo’s likeness is surrounded by two words: “Chase Dreams.”</p> <p>Specialty spray paint artist Chase Reiff created the mural as part of his “Cleaning up the Streets” series. The murals cover up gang tags with street art. He sees it as an artistic way to prevent property damage and influence his community, especially at-risk youths.</p> <p>“That Frida wall is on Harrison Avenue, which is the general direction that most students walk when they’re leaving school. It’s a hot spot,” said Reiff, who is a member of the Sunnyside Arts Commission. “I’m out there just trying to make sure the kids that are influenced by it are not seeing [graffiti] on their way to and from school.”</p> <p>Graffiti is not the only type of gang-related crime that has increased in the last two years, and Reiff is not the only community member trying to address it.</p> <p>Police, school and even code enforcement officers are part of a broad-based approach aimed at reducing gang violence.</p> <p>Increasing gang activity Some residents say they’ve noticed more gun violence and other crime this year.</p> <p>In May, five people were shot at Sunnyside’s Cinco de Mayo festival.</p> <p>A man who was running a rock climbing wall at Cinco de Mayo was shot in the leg. So were two boys, 14 and 16, and a 6-year-old girl. A 12-year-old boy was shot in the face. None of the injuries were life-threatening.</p> <p>The remainder of the weekend festival and a parade were canceled.</p>

A 13-year-old suspect was arrested, but charges were later dropped by prosecutors who cited lack of cooperation from the state's only eyewitness, also a juvenile. An investigation continues, and prosecutors said charges can be refiled if evidence becomes available.

The outcry from the community was immediate and loud. Sunnyside residents poured into a City Council meeting, looking for solutions.

Crimes involving gang members have climbed from 493 reported incidents in 2019 to 630 last year. By this past September, 452 such incidents had already been reported.

Tagging and graffiti are defined as gang-related crimes.

Reiff has noticed.

"As the gangs and crime spiked, so does the graffiti. After that shooting around Cinco de Mayo, pretty much that whole fence got destroyed with gang-related things that were talking about the shooting," said Reiff, who continues to update the mural. "That wall developed into what it is by me continually going back and fixing all the gang graffiti."

Gun incidents, robbery, human trafficking and aggravated assault are also associated with gang activity, said Sunnyside police Chief Al Escalera.

Courtney Percival, a crime analyst for the department, said there was a substantial increase in aggravated assault and robberies this year.

"This year in Sunnyside, we've had a record number of shootings," Percival said. "When we're looking at our shootings and our different categories of assault, that was definitely driven by gang crime."

Fabiola Zepeda, who recently moved to Sunnyside from Mabton, said she hears gunfire two or three times a week in her neighborhood.

"It makes me uncomfortable, especially because I have kids," she said. "Nobody wants to talk about it."

Mario Ortega, who was born and raised in Sunnyside, said that this year is the worst in recent memory. He referenced drive-by shootings and the weekly sound of gunshots in his neighborhood.

"It's young punks shooting at each other," he said.

Potential causes

Many factors have contributed to the increase in crime and gang activity.

"Historically, this city has seen a cycle of gang violence over the past 30 years. It seems to hit every 10-12 years," Escalera said.

Escalera noted that gang members being released from prison leads to increased gang activity.

A majority of gang members tend to be youths. Percival said many are under the age of 25.

A lack of organized activities, as well as influences from social media, can make it easier for gangs to recruit.

"There's fewer things for kids to do," Escalera said. "We have fewer social activities."

Ramon Razo, a gang prevention and substance use trainee at Harrison Middle School in Sunnyside, said students join gangs because they want to feel like a part of something. He works to strengthen students' sense of belonging academically and socially.

Razo said gang prevention looks different for each student based on an individual's needs. Razo said a holistic approach to a student's particular situation is important and should include attainable goals and multiple role models.

Police said wider community involvement can help, while tolerance or apathy can increase crime. There can also be a lack of cooperation from victims and witnesses who fear reprisal.

"It is difficult on any community; certainly they don't like it. What bothers us is how comfortable some communities can be," said Escalera. "There has to be more involvement from the community to curb this issue."

The police response

Sunnyside police are focusing on three primary strategies, with two centered on community involvement.

Community-oriented policing revolves around strengthening connections between police officers and community members, which police hope builds trust.

"We have to be able to work together," Escalera said. "One of the strongest tools in our arsenal is community."

Sunnyside police have complemented this with risk-based policing, a strategy focusing on locations rather than people. Using software, Percival, the department crime analyst, puts together maps identifying "hot spots" where crime is higher.

Escalera said police evaluate those neighborhoods and are focusing on code enforcement. He hopes addressing minor violations and encouraging cleaner and less cluttered neighborhoods will lead to a sustainable, cultural shift.

"We're trying to change the culture of the neighborhood by getting them to understand that they need to bring some pride back into the neighborhood, that they need to work together to create safety," Escalera said. "The way they do this is to begin showing others that they care about their neighborhood. One of those ways is to clean it up."

Escalera noted that tall grass or shrubs can make it difficult for police to see broken windows or doors. He added that abandoned cars or furniture on property can be potential hiding places.

Sunnyside police are collaborating with the city's code enforcement staff, building inspectors and street department, as well as the Yakima County Humane Society, to conduct neighborhood walk-throughs, where officers talk with residents about code violations and explain how they affect local crime.

"The intent is not to write tickets, it's to provide notification," Escalera said. "You want to go in there and let people know that this is what you're doing and how it impacts the crime reduction effort and what their part is in doing that."

Escalera views neighborhood walk-throughs as a more sustainable solution to crime and emphasizes his goal of working with residents.

"For the most part, they've been very accommodating," Escalera said, "and we have written very, very few tickets out of this entire ordeal."

In the first neighborhood where this strategy was used, Escalera said crime has been reduced by 33% "across the board." He added that police officers have not made a single arrest in that neighborhood.

The other major strategy employed by the Sunnyside Police Department is precision policing. Precision policing focuses on violent offenders, Escalera said, and is conducted by the street crimes unit, which began operating in January.

Under precision policing, Sunnyside's street crimes unit works with Percival to identify people of interest based on how often they contact them and what types of crimes are occurring.

Those individuals then become a priority for investigations and arrests.

In both precision and risk-based policing, Percival plays a large role in analyzing data and advising the Police Department's approach. Escalera said officers are integrating that into day-to-day activities as well as larger strategies.

Sunnyside schools

Gang prevention efforts also are integrated in the Sunnyside School District.

Each middle school has a substance use and gang prevention specialist. It's been critical, especially after the previous specialist took a sabbatical when the district's gang-free initiative through Sunnyside United-Undidos expired.

Those positions are now funded by Project Aware, a five-year grant for mental health resources. Project Aware brings mental health therapists and more than 20 counselors to the district, said Doug Rogers, director of student support services at Sunnyside School District.

Rogers said the school district has also implemented parenting classes and meetings. The goal is to foster social and emotional learning in families to prevent mental health issues stemming from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

"We have an ACEs and mental health problem. That's where our struggle is," Rogers said. "We're in a high-poverty area, and a lot of kids experience a lot of tough things. Gangs are a piece of it, for sure, but there are a lot of things going on."

Daily efforts

Razo is a specialist at Harrison Middle School. Over the course of a day, he works with three or four students in one-on-one situations, but will check in on dozens of students daily. He often focuses on students who are often absent or struggling with discipline, but his goal is for students to feel comfortable enough to come to him.

He said the Cinco de Mayo shooting sparked more awareness among staff, students and parents. Students saw the consequences of violence and staff discussed ways to make schools feel safer.

Razo's approach is highly individualized, and he helps different students set goals. Razo works with other school staff to support students in the ways that they need. Some students need education about how gangs operate and signs of recruitment or initiation. Some need a positive role model or exposure to new opportunities. Others need more attention or home visits.

"Some of these kids have great leadership skills. Some of these kids are awesome to be around with. It's just that gang piece or substance abuse piece that separates them from your average student," Razo said. "Each student is so different when it comes to gang and substance use. There is not one answer for all students."

"There are the kids who are barely being recruited and are very reachable. I give them examples of what recruitment looks like. I could give them information about what recruitment looks like, about what initiation looks like," Razo added. "Then there are some students who are fully into a gang. That looks different than the guy who is barely being recruited."

While each student has their own story, Razo does employ several large-scale strategies. He coaches boxing after school, which gives students something to do and a place to be. It's free and open to any student at the school.

Razo wants to strengthen students' academic and social relationships. Creating a sense of support and belonging at school is important, he said. Harrison Middle School has a team of counselors and mental health professionals dedicated to creating a positive environment.

"We don't want them to feel excluded. We want them to feel like they're a part of the whole school. We want them to feel that they're loved, that they're a part of something," Razo said. "That's huge with the gangs. They join gangs because they want to feel like a part of something. If we make them feel like they're a part of the school, they will be less likely to [be recruited to a gang]."

One of the most critical parts of gang or substance use prevention is, in Razo's mind, communication. Not just with the student or between school district staff, but with parents.

Staff at Harrison want to constantly provide students with positive messages, and they want parents on the same page.

"Building that communication between families and people who work with the child is huge," Razo said. "I'm also a father. At the end of the day, I'd rather go to a school meeting than a court hearing."

Reiff feels the importance of that — it's something he tries to put into his murals. He feels like his work has changed in the past few years in Sunnyside, becoming as much for others as it is for him.

"I wanted to build my community through art," Reiff said. "How do I make sure people know they're in their hometown, feeling comfortable?"

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HEADLINE	10/08 Ohio high school football game shooting
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/10/08/toledo-shooting-outside-high-school-football-game/5001665251495/
GIST	<p>Oct. 8 (UPI) -- Two adults and one student were shot outside a high school football game in Toledo, Ohio, Friday night are all expected to survive, officials said on Saturday.</p> <p>All three victims were taken to area hospitals with non life-threatening injuries, police confirmed.</p> <p>Police responded to Whitmer Memorial Stadium in west Toledo after multiple shots were fired about 9:30 p.m. Video showed spectators inside the field running for safety as play was halted with less than 7 minutes left in the game.</p> <p>Witnesses reported hearing at least 12 gunshots outside the southwest corner of the venue in Lucas County, Ohio. Bullet casings were seen scattered on the ground behind the fieldhouse of the stadium, which has a seating capacity of 8,000 people.</p> <p>"Two adults and one Whitmer student were shot outside the stadium, suffering non-life-threatening injuries," Washington Local Schools Superintendent Kadee Anstadt said in a Twitter video. "There were no fatalities. We are grateful for our security and district staff who quickly secured a very chaotic scene, just as our training prepared us to do."</p> <p>"To our students, staff and community, we want you to know that you are safe. This was a crime that was unrelated in any way to a Washington Local Schools student."</p>

	<p>Toledo police later confirmed a pair of arrests had been made which could "possibly" be related to the shooting. A search continued for two more individuals.</p> <p>Witnesses also saw a black Dodge Charger being towed from an apartment building in west Toledo where the arrests were made.</p> <p>"No guests were injured in the evacuation and we could not be prouder of our students, staff, Whitmer fans, and our guests from Central Catholic," school officials said in a statement on the district's website. "The Whitmer Athletic policy of wandng and screening all guests was enforced and the WLS pre-established safety plan was established immediately."</p> <p>The school's athletic events scheduled for Saturday were postponed.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/08 Profile help catch Stockton serial killer?
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/stockton-oakland-serial-killer-planned-out-murders-experts-say?ref=home
GIST	<p>Six dead and one survivor. One grainy piece of surveillance footage. The trail of death left by a suspected serial killer in Stockton and Oakland, California, has left these communities on edge. Now, the victims' families and city residents are looking for answers.</p> <p>The Daily Beast spoke to three experts on serial killers about who the Stockton killer might be, why he is killing, and how he might be caught.</p> <p>All agree that the killer is likely local or very familiar with the Stockton area, plans out his crimes, and intentionally chooses vulnerable victims.</p> <p>Enzo Yaksic, author of <i>Killer Data: Modern Perspectives on Serial Murder</i>, and a researcher at Atypical Murder Research Group, offered the most specific profile of the Stockton killer.</p> <p>The killer is a male in his early thirties, Yaksic predicts, based on data his group has collected on serial killers, and lives in the same north Stockton neighborhood where most of his victims have been killed. He lives with close relatives who may not be aware of his activities.</p> <p>He may be killing out of a need to appease intense feelings of anger, Yaksic says. Killing may be "the offender's way of relieving the stress and pressure he experiences in daily life," Yaksic told The Daily Beast by email.</p> <p>He believes the reason so many of the victims were homeless is because they were easy targets.</p> <p>"Part of the reason that many serial murderers target the unhoused, beyond their inherent vulnerability, is that they reside in unmonitored places and generally do not have devices such as cellphones that can record them," Yaksic wrote.</p> <p>But he also said that the killer may be homeless himself, or at least familiar with the community. Although most of the killer's victims are Latino, police have said they do not currently believe the killings are hate crimes. The shooter may be Latino himself, Yaksic says, as the majority of serial killings are intra-racial.</p> <p>He may be keenly watching the media coverage of his crimes, Yaksic says, and enjoying being "recognized for his deeds."</p> <p>Yaksic is confident the killer will be caught when someone from the community comes forward with information.</p> <p>For the families of the victims, there are currently more questions than answers about the person who took the lives of their loved ones.</p>

“Who does that? What kind of monster does that?,” William Debudey, the uncle of victim Salvador Debudey Jr., asked in an interview with The Daily Beast on Wednesday. Debudey Jr., known as “Sal” to family and friends, was [shot to death in the parking lot of a Popeyes](#) on Aug. 11, while trying to buy dinner.

The 43-year-old was the third of six known victims of a shooter who the Stockton Police Department now believes is a serial killer.

The first, Juan Miguel Vasquez Serrano, 39, who was homeless at the time of his murder, was shot in on a street corner in east Oakland on April 10, 2021. Six days later, and 70 miles away, Natasha Latour was shot outside her tent in an industrial neighborhood of Stockton. She survived the attack.

For more than a year, the killer did not strike again. That changed at the beginning of the summer, when Paul Yaw was shot in a small park in a residential neighborhood of north Stockton in the early hours of July 8. Yaw was also homeless at the time of his death. Just over a month later, Salvador Dubudey Jr., was slain in a Popeyes parking lot.

Three more men would die in the weeks that followed, all in the same five-mile radius of north Stockton. On Aug. 30, Jonathan Hernandez Rodriguez, 21, was shot while sitting in his car outside the apartment complex where he lived off East Hammer Lane. On Sept. 21, Juan Cruz, 52, was shot outside an apartment complex on Manchester Avenue.

Finally, in the early hours of Sept. 27, Lawrence Lopez Sr., 54, was killed on Porter Avenue. Lopez was a father of six children, and an aspiring musician.

Jerry Lopez, Lawrence’s brother, said he felt confident the police would soon capture his killer.

“They’re getting close to this guy,” he told The Daily Beast on Wednesday, “I can feel it.”

Investigations like this one take collaborative police work, thorough crime scene analysis and forensic witness interviews, says Jeffrey Rinek, a retired FBI agent. As well as a bit of luck.

Rinek served with the FBI for 30 years. In his long career he worked serial murder cases, and specialized in cases involving children. For several years, Rinek worked out of the FBI field office in Sacramento, only 50 miles from Stockton.

Rinek says we should be careful not to make assumptions about the perpetrator, and emphasized that very little information has been made public by police. However, having reviewed the case, he gave his thoughts about the killer.

“I believe that the offender was making an effort to ensure he or she was alone with the victim, and that the area would be safe. I believe that the offender is taking measures to lower the risk factor of the crimes,” he said, pointing out that this means the crimes are probably planned and not spontaneous.

Rinek said the locations and timings of the crime suggest the killer may be surveilling his victims prior to attacking them, making sure he approaches under the cover of darkness while they are isolated.

The close proximity of five of the shootings—clustered in north Stockton—suggests to Rinek the perpetrator may know the area well.

“If you took all these locations, and determined the center of them, what would be there?,” he says, “It’s very possible that the offender is living right there.”

Two of the shootings stand out to Rinek as different from the others. The first known shooting took place in Oakland, 70 miles from Stockton, when Juan Miguel Vasquez Serrano was killed on April 10, 2021.

Rinek said that if he was investigating the case, he would be looking closely at that killing, as well as the shooting of Natasha LaTour, the killer's lone surviving victim.

LaTour now believes the subsequent killings could have been prevented if law enforcement had taken her story seriously. She says they dismissed her because she was homeless at the time.

"Five people died because they didn't listen to me," LaTour told a local outlet.

The fact that LaTour survived shows the killer is not infallible, Rinek says. "That means the offender made a mistake. You can tell from the mistake they make what they're trying to do," Rinek says. If he was investigating, he would ask himself: what went wrong that night?

LaTour, described the shooter as wearing dark pants, a dark hooded sweater and a black mask, in an interview with a local outlet 209 Times. Rinek says this is key, because it shows the perpetrator is trying to conceal their identity.

LaTour was shot at least nine times, she says. That makes Rinek think the weapon is probably a semi-automatic pistol, capable of firing several rounds quickly.

While police have not confirmed a single weapon was used in the slayings, Stockton police chief, Stanley McFadden, suggested during a Tuesday press conference that a pistol may be involved.

"I have absolutely no answer as to why that pistol went dormant for over 400 days," McFadden said of the weapon used to shoot LaTour, and then, over a year later, to kill Paul Yaw.

It is this gun that may prove key to identifying the killer. Police have implied that they have ballistic evidence that links all seven shootings. Rinek says it's interesting the police have chosen to make that information public.

"Now the offender knows to get rid of that gun," he says.

Robert Shug, a forensic psychologist and a professor of criminology and forensic psychology at California State University Long Beach, usually encounters serial killers when he interviews them after they've committed their crimes and been caught.

In this case, he is watching a case unfold in real time, with a perpetrator still at large. Schug, like Rinek, believes understanding the victims is important.

"Serial killers kill people who are vulnerable, who they can overpower easily," Schug says, pointing out that many of the victims were homeless and all but one were male. It's unusual, he says, to see a serial killer targeting men.

"These may be victims of convenience," he said, pointing out that the killer strikes at night, "Are these just people who are out and about?"

In a way, Schug says, it is the randomness of these killings that makes them so terrifying.

"It could be anybody. And the victims could be anybody," he says.

"We don't know what the motive is. What we do believe is that it's mission-oriented," Stockton Police Chief Stanley McFadden said on Tuesday, "This person's on a mission."

Schug says this is an interesting choice of words that implies the police may know more than they are letting on.

	<p>“That’s implying that there’s evidence to suggest this person may be going around serving some higher purpose,” he says. What the killer may think that purpose is, Schug doesn’t know. It’s too soon to speculate, he says. There is simply too little information.</p> <p>Police have released a single grainy video of a person of interest. A surveillance camera captured a person walking away—their back to the camera. There’s little that would help identify the person, other than a slightly unusual walk. Schug says it’s not much for law enforcement to go on.</p> <p>Nonetheless, he’s confident the shooter will be caught, either through diligent police work, luck, or both. The ubiquity of cellphones, smart doorbells and security cameras will mean that sooner or later, a clearer image of the perpetrator will be captured, he says.</p> <p>“That’s going to make it harder for this guy to keep going,” Schug says. “I don’t think he can keep doing this in Stockton much longer and getting away with it.”</p> <p>For now, the Stockton police say they are considering every possibility, as they receive hundreds of tips every day. The police “still don’t know if it’s just one, or two, or multiple suspects,” Officer Joseph Silva, a spokesman for the Stockton Police Department, told The Daily Beast earlier this week.</p> <p>The FBI are now assisting local law enforcement. A \$125,000 reward is being offered for information leading to an arrest.</p> <p>In the meantime, there is little reassurance for the people of Stockton and Oakland.</p> <p>“The fact remains that this offender feels comfortable walking dangerous streets alone at odd hours because they are supremely confident in their own ability to react with an extreme level of violence,” Enzo Yaksic told The Daily Beast.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/08 Police investigate shots fired Tacoma Mall
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/police-investigate-shooting-at-tacoma-mall-suspects-at-large
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. - Police are investigating a shooting that happened outside of the Tacoma Mall Saturday evening.</p> <p>According to the Tacoma Police Department (TPD), officers responded to reports of multiple gunshots being fired in the mall's parking lot just before 5:30 p.m.</p> <p>Officers on scene say two groups of people started firing shots at one another, then they all drove away. The TPD says no injuries have been reported at this time.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/08 Seattle: 3 separate shooting incidents
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/three-shooting-incidents-seattle/281-00bd9c2a-9509-4621-a995-096b309e44b9
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Two victims were injured in separate shooting incidents in Seattle on Friday night. Shots were also fired and damaged a garage door at a West Seattle Fire station.</p> <p>Around 6 p.m. in the Greenwood neighborhood, police were called to investigate a shooting on the 100 block of Northwest 85th Street, according to the Seattle Police Department (SPD).</p> <p>They found one person who had been shot multiple times, including in the face and in the leg. The victim, identified as a 50-year-old man, was taken to Harborview Medical Center and is being treated in the ICU.</p>

	<p>According to SPD, witnesses told officers that a security guard attempted to stop a man who had thrown a rock at a nearby bank window. The witnesses reportedly told officers they saw the suspect pull out a gun and shoot the security guard four times at close range.</p> <p>A suspect has not been identified.</p> <p>Around 8:50 p.m., police were called to investigate a shooting at Airport Way South and South Forest Street. They found a victim who had been shot multiple times. The suspect fled the area, according to SPD. The victim, identified as a 46-year-old man, was taken to Harborview Medical Center in serious condition.</p> <p>In the third incident, shots were fired hitting and damaging a garage door at a West Seattle Fire Station on the 7700 block of 35th Avenue Southwest. No one was injured, according to SPD.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/08 Revelations: Breonna Taylor warrant details
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/police-kentucky-breonna-taylor-louisville-merrick-garland-23195fa577f56470a4cce00aff429b7
GIST	<p>LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Recent revelations about the search warrant that led to Breonna Taylor’s death have reopened old wounds in Louisville’s Black community and disrupted the city’s efforts to restore trust in the police department.</p> <p>Former Louisville officer Kelly Goodlett admitted in federal court that she and another officer falsified information in the warrant. That confirmed to many, including U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, that Taylor never should have been visited by armed officers on March 13, 2020.</p> <p>Protest leaders who took to the streets of Kentucky’s largest city after she was fatally shot by police say Goodlett’s confession confirms their suspicions that Louisville police can’t be trusted and that systemic issues run deep. They say officers abused demonstrators after the botched raid, and that her fatal shooting is just one of many reasons why the community remains wary.</p> <p>“What bothers me so incredibly is that so many lives were lost because of this lie,” said Hannah Drake, a Louisville poet and leader in a push for justice after Taylor’s death. “They don’t even understand the far-reaching tentacles of what they did.”</p> <p>More than once during that long, hot summer, individual officers escalated rather than calmed a situation.</p> <p>Days before a Black man was shot dead by a National Guard member in his restaurant’s kitchen, an officer who wounded the man’s niece taunted demonstrators on social media, daring them to challenge police. Another Louisville officer faces a federal charge over hitting a kneeling protester in the back of the head with a baton.</p> <p>“We were right to protest,” Louisville Urban League President Sadiqa Reynolds tweeted shortly after Goodlett’s plea. “People are dead and lives upended because of a pile of lies.”</p> <p>Some Louisville officers have been disciplined, fired, and even charged with crimes for abusing protesters, in addition to the four officers now charged federally in relation to the botched raid. But the problems can’t be blamed on a few rogue officers, according to a lawsuit brought by Taylor’s white neighbors, who were nearly hit by gunfire during the raid.</p> <p>They accuse the department of having a “warrior culture” and cultivating an “us vs. them” mentality. In a lawsuit, the family of the man shot at the restaurant alleges that police aggression during a curfew instigated his death.</p>

Louisville is working on numerous reforms, implementing a new 911 diversion program, increasing leadership reviews of search warrant requests and improving officer training. The city has outlawed “no knock” warrants, conducted an independent audit and paid Taylor’s mother \$12 million in a civil settlement. A new police chief, Erika Shields, was hired in 2021.

Such reforms have been implemented amid a continuing U.S. Department of Justice investigation of LMPD’s policing practices, which could land at any moment.

The chief called Taylor’s death “horrific,” and said in an interview with The Associated Press that she welcomes the federal investigations, which led to charges against Goodlett and the other officers. “I think we’re in an important place that was necessary to get to, before we move on,” she said.

Mayor Greg Fischer, whose 12-year run ends this year, said city officials turned the probes over to state and federal officials “because the community rightfully was saying LMPD should not be investigating LMPD, and I agree with that.”

Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron’s investigation then ended without any officers being charged directly in Taylor’s death. It took federal prosecutors to convict Goodlett — she pleaded guilty to conspiracy and admitted to helping create a phony link between Taylor and a wanted drug dealer. Goodlett resigned the day before her charges were announced in August and awaits sentencing next month.

In August court filings, federal prosecutors said another former officer, Joshua Jaynes, inserted the crucial information into the warrant request that drew Taylor into the narcotic squad’s investigation — claiming that a postal inspector had verified that the drug dealer was receiving packages at Taylor’s apartment.

Goodlett and Jaynes knew that was false, as did their sergeant, Kyle Meany, when he signed off on the request, Garland said.

“Breonna Taylor should be alive today,” Garland said.

Goodlett, Jaynes and Meany were all fired, as was a fourth officer, Brett Hankison, who faces federal charges for blindly firing into Taylor’s home through a side door and window. He was exonerated on similar state charges earlier this year. Jaynes and Meany are being tried together. That trial, along with Hankison’s, is scheduled for next year. Goodlett is expected to testify against Jaynes.

Metro Council President David James, a former police officer, said that to restore trust, Louisville’s Black community “just wants the police to treat them the same way they would treat people in another part of the city.”

No incident highlighted the racial divide more than the fatal shooting of Black restaurant owner David McAtee as police sought to enforce the city’s curfew in a predominantly African American neighborhood far from the center of the Taylor protests.

Just before midnight on May 31, 2020, Louisville officers and Kentucky National Guard members were sent to a gathering spot near McAtee’s YaYa’s BBQ “for a show of force (and) intimidation,” McAtee’s family alleges in a lawsuit.

A few nights earlier, officer Katie Crews had been photographed in a line of police as a protester offered her a handful of flowers. Crews posted the image on social media, writing that she hoped the protester was hurting from the pepper balls she “got lit up with a little later on.”

“Come back and get ya some more ole girl, I’ll be on the line again tonight,” Crews wrote.

When officers marched toward McAtee’s restaurant, Crews escalated the tension by firing non-lethal pepper balls at the crowd, an LMPD investigation found. Many people rushed into McAtee’s kitchen, where his niece was shot in the neck by Crews with the non-lethal rounds.

	<p>That prompted McAtee to pull a pistol from his hip and fire a shot. Seeing that, Crews and other officers switched to live rounds and McAtee, leaning out his kitchen door, was fatally shot in the chest by a National Guard member. The deadly force was found to be justified, but the police chief was fired by Fischer because the Louisville officers involved had failed to turn on their body cameras, just as they did during the Taylor raid.</p> <p>Crews later admitted that no one in the crowd had been disorderly. She was fired by Shields in February. Now she faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted of a federal charge of using unreasonable force.</p> <p>James, the Metro Council president and former officer, groaned while recalling McAtee's death, saying he was saddened because he knew him and had eaten his food. The "extremely unfortunate and tragic" shooting has stuck with him as an example of bad policing, he said.</p> <p>Drake, the poet and activist, said more systemic changes are needed. In the meantime, she said authorities should apologize for their treatment of protesters, and drop any cases against people arrested for demonstrating that summer. Hundreds have been cleared, but some remain criminally charged. Knowing it was all so unnecessary only deepens the pain, she said.</p> <p>"We could have avoided all this," Drake said. "And I think that's where the pain comes from — we were right!"</p>
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HEADLINE	10/08 Sabotage hits trains northern Germany
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/business-germany-amsterdam-cologne-a54c3b5a62d4801ad7ae49c7dc6430d0
GIST	<p>BERLIN (AP) — A train communications system in Germany was targeted by sabotage Saturday, forcing both passenger and cargo trains to halt for nearly three hours across the northwest of the country, authorities said.</p> <p>Operator Deutsche Bahn said early Saturday that no long-distance or regional trains were running in the states of Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony and Bremen. That also affected trains between Berlin and Cologne, neither of which was directly affected by the system failure, and between Berlin and Amsterdam, while trains from Denmark weren't crossing the border into Germany.</p> <p>The sabotage hit a primary mode of regional and intercity transport in Germany as well as disrupting supply lines for industries using cargo trains.</p> <p>After the nearly three-hour suspension, Deutsche Bahn said the problem — a "failure of the digital train radio system" — had been resolved but that some disruptions could still be expected. It later said the outage was caused by sabotage.</p> <p>Transport Minister Volker Wissing said cables that are "essential for handling railway traffic safely" were deliberately severed at two separate locations. He said Germany's federal police were investigating the incident.</p> <p>Federal police said the crime scenes were in a Berlin suburb and in the western state of North Rhine-Westphalia, German news agency dpa reported. There was no immediate word on who might have been responsible.</p> <p>"We can't say anything today either about the background to this act or the perpetrators," Wissing said. "The investigation will have to yield that."</p>
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